

Harvesting Resilient Futures

Strengthening Collaborative leadership across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires

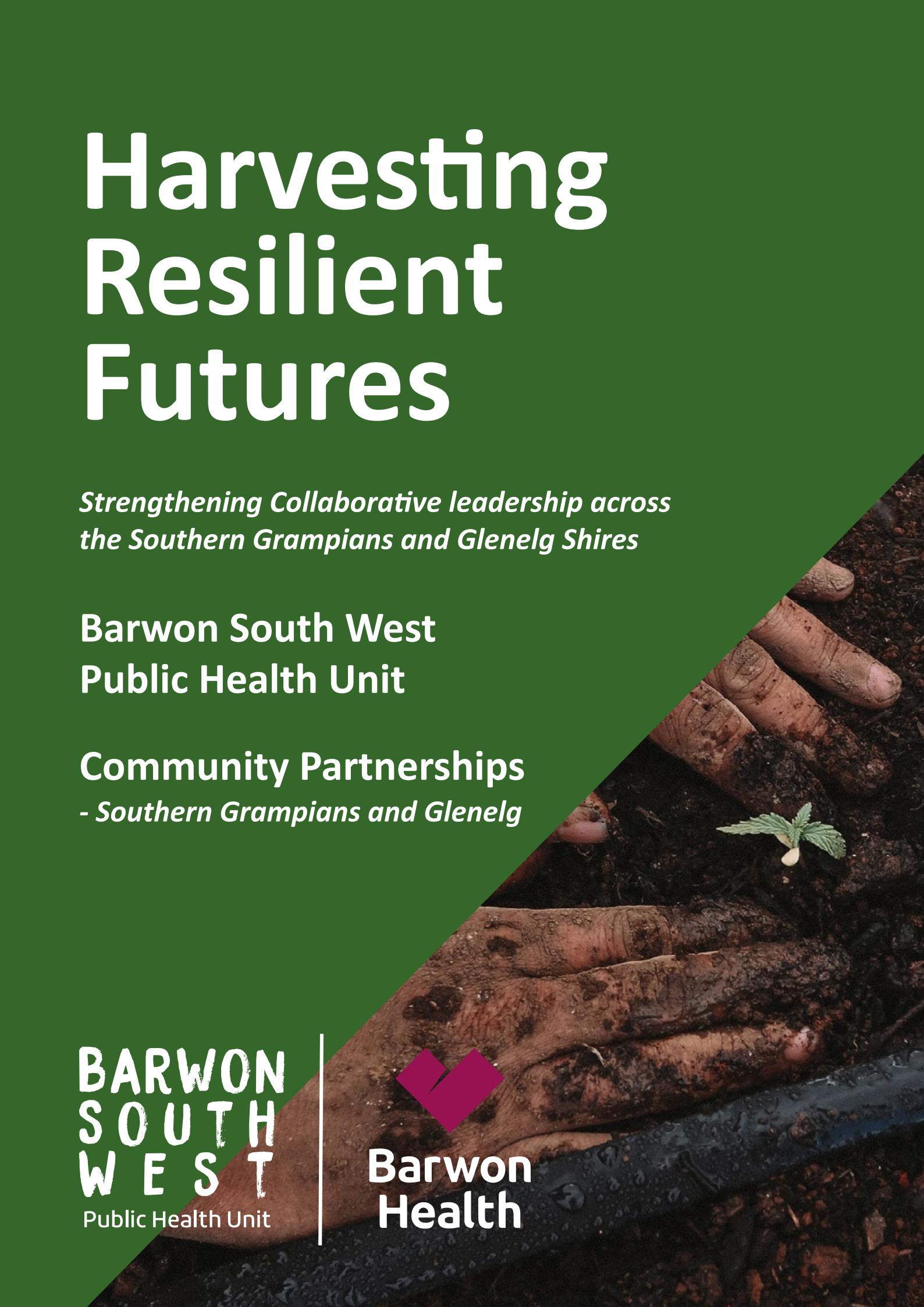
Barwon South West
Public Health Unit

Community Partnerships
- Southern Grampians and Glenelg

BARWON
SOUTH
WEST
Public Health Unit



Barwon
Health



Copyright 2023 Barwon Health. This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior permission from the copyright holder.

Please cite this report as:

Brown, J. and Rhook, E. Harvesting Resilient Futures *Strengthening Collaborative leadership across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires*. Barwon South West Public Health Unit 2023

Acknowledgements

This work is made possible by the Victorian Department of Health, Mental Health Branch, Agricultural Dependent Communities Resilience Funding Program. We would like to acknowledge the contributions and dedication of the Barwon South West Public Health Unit Community Partnerships - Southern Grampians and Glenelg member agencies and stakeholders for their enthusiastic contribution during a time of challenge and change and commitment to ongoing action. Excellent coaching and mentoring in Community Based Systems Dynamics and Group Model Building was provided to the project by the Global Centre for Preventive Health and Nutrition, Institute for Health Transformation School of Health and Social Development, Faculty of Health at Deakin University and particular thanks to Penny Fraser and Cindy Needham for sharing their skills and knowledge so generously.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Background	3
1. Community Resilience at a glance	4
2. Frameworks	5
3. Approaches and programs	6
4. Collaborative approaches	7
4.1 Ganawarra Shire Council Community Resilience Committee	7
4.2 Tarnagulla Community Resilience Plan	8
4.3 Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy and taskforce	9
4.4 Building Resilience to Disasters (Queensland Government Guide).....	10
4.5 The Community Collaborative for Resilience (The Collaborative)	11
4.6 SGGPCP Collaboration for Community led Resilience (COVID 19)	12
4.7 The Multi-cultural Emergency Management Partnership.....	13
5. Building a Local Understanding	13
5.1 Interviews.....	13
5.2 Developing a Shared Understanding (Next Steps).....	15
Workshops	17
Evaluation	26
Corresponding NCFH Recommendations	35
References	37
Appendices	38

**WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND. WE PAY
OUR RESPECTS TO ALL ELDERS PAST,
PRESENT AND FUTURE.**



Executive Summary

Community Resilience is complex. Highlighting the valuable role the health and community sector can play enhancing resilience while balancing limited capacity and understanding within this sector affords a significant challenge. The Harvesting Resilient Futures project set out to understand local community resilience across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shire. The initial focus interview with local stakeholders representing community, health, local government and emergency management aimed to understand the drivers of resilience locally, potential roles and actions. The interviews uncovered five major factors that contribute to resilience locally:

- Community Connectedness and participation
- Access to resources, services and information
- Future Thinking (Goals, Hopes and Pride)
- Social Justice (Equity, Inclusion, Tackling poverty)
- Leadership (Community Champions and Advocates)

A rapid review of fifteen frameworks and approaches was also undertaken with the following key themes drawn out:

- Collaborative relationships across cross sector boundaries
- Understand the complexity
- Mobilise collective action approaches
- Community led (with built community capacity)

To further develop a shared understanding of local community resilience, stakeholders participated in Group Model Building (GMB) Workshops to understand the local system and visualise this in a systems map. The map enabled stakeholders to understand the complexity, see the contributing factors and connection between factors as well as identifying gaps, actions and potential for collaboration. As a result four actions have been prioritised to be implemented across the region. These are:

1. Community Connectors Network
(Facilitated by Southern Grampians Community Partnership)
2. Community Connection Activities
(Led in the first instance by Casterton Memorial Hospital)
3. Community Capacity Building
(Led in the first instance by Western District Health Service)
4. Community Emergency Education
(In development – potential collaboration between CFA and SES).

Introduction and Background

Farmers and farming communities are constantly facing increased stressors driven by a range of factors including economic, climate change, extreme events such as drought and COVID 19, land use change and many others. These are complex issues and no one solution can alleviate the ongoing stressors faced by these communities. Adaptive and flexible approaches, based on the local need have to take into account solutions that encompass on ground activity and services, strategic frameworks, leadership support and buy in, advocacy and policy change. The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) (COAG 2011) describes non-government and community sector organisations as being at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia. In addition, the strategy has a recurring theme that refers to the importance of strength of existing partnerships and networks, and that such networks are significant in leading change and promoting and enhancing disaster resilience.

The Harvesting Resilient Futures approach aimed to increase the resilience of the Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities to stressors and shocks by establishing networks, building capacity and aligning efforts of support services in our agricultural dependent communities. By strengthening this social capital focussed on community resilience, we will support our community in preparing and adapting to stressors and shocks and hence improve the overall mental health of the community. Harvesting Resilient Futures will result in our community designing and leading its own aligned place based actions that are responsive and flexible to their needs into the future. It is envisaged that Harvesting Resilient Futures will be the catalyst and foundation to a long term strategic approach to improving resilience in our region and creating a process and model that other communities can replicate and adapt to their own context. A summary of the project overview can be found in Appendix 1.

The prevalence of farming communities across the Glenelg and Southern Grampians is high. The largest industry sector within both local government areas is agriculture, forestry and fishing which makes up 13.9% and 20.1% of people employed within these industries in Glenelg and Southern Grampians respectively. These numbers are significantly higher than the average across regional Victoria (7.7% Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census population and Housing, 2015). Forty percent of Glenelg residents are employed in the agriculture, forestry or fishing industries (Glenelg MPWHP 2021- 2025 Community Snapshot, DRAFT).

A team of skilled staff at the Barwon South West Public Health Unit Community Partnership Southern Grampians and Glenelg who have existing relationships and networks across a diverse range of sectors leveraged these to implement the Harvesting Resilient Futures Project. As evidence of SGGPCP's credibility in the region, a recent Swinburne University Social Network Analysis study (Aboutalebi Karkavandi et al 2021) exploring the value of partnerships and SGGPCP during COVID 19 found that of 38 survey respondents, 92% indicated high levels of trust in the abilities of SGGPCP; 89% scored SGGPCP highly in regards to benevolence (treating partners in a positive manner) and 92% highly for integrity.

Over this time SGGPCP worked closely with our partner agencies to build their capacity to understand the impacts of climate change on their community and identify their role in action. This has resulted in a number of major projects highlighting the role the community and health sector can play in



enhancing resilience. Examples of these projects include: [Gleneilg SAVES](#), [Rural People: Resilient Futures](#), [Enhancing Networks for Resilience](#), [Balmoral Fire Connect](#) and [Primary Care Partnerships for Community Resilience](#).

SGGPCP was experienced in facilitating community-led solutions to complex problems and achieving measurable results. SGGPCP had six years of experience in using community-based systems dynamics process to help community make sense of complex systems, to understand the connection and relationships and then point to multiple and varied actions. SGGPCP had proven ability to utilise Systems Thinking approaches through initiating and supporting community led initiatives to reduce childhood obesity and build thriving children. These include [SEA Change Portland](#), [GenR8 Change](#) and [Hands Up Casterton](#). All three community led initiatives continue to have an impact on our local communities and have collectively engaged more than 1000 community members in designing and actioning solutions fit for their local context. Measurable outcomes of these approaches are reflected in several published papers, including Four-year outcomes from a Cluster Randomized Whole of Systems Trial of Prevention Strategies for Childhood Obesity (Allender et. al. 2021).

1. Community Resilience at a glance

The Rapid Review: Agriculture-dependent Community Resilience report from the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) (Kennedy et al 2021) acknowledges that there are wide and varied definitions of community resilience. This is further reinforced by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) (Howard, Rawsthorne, Sampson & Katrak,(2020) who reiterate that there is no single, commonly agreed-upon definition of community resilience. Although many different definitions are found in the literature, the majority share a number of common themes:

- ability to prepare for, withstand and absorb disruptions arising from disasters and other emergency events
- ability to adapt to changing conditions, including in the physical, social and economic environment
- ability to recover and continue to function and maintain self-sufficiency while under stress
- ability to 'build back better', improve over time and learn from previous disaster experiences

Additionally the FRRR report found that more recent research on strategies to enhance community disaster resilience has focused on strength-based approaches, effective partnerships within communities and participatory research strategies that engage communities in reflexive learning processes. The importance of community engagement and active participation and the significance of communities' unique culture and shared values are emphasised in the majority of resilience building approaches. This can be summarised as: Community resilience is enhanced through robust social networks and stakeholder partnerships within communities, responsive local leadership, and commitment to shared values, knowledge and social norms.

2. Frameworks

Existing frameworks tend more towards a focus on disaster resilience rather than everyday resilience. One of the most widely recognised international frameworks referred to often throughout Emergency Management sectors is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Sendai Framework aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.



The Australian **National Strategy for Disaster Resilience** which was released in 2011 acknowledges the increasing severity and regularity of disasters in Australia and the need for a coordinated, cooperative national effort to enhance Australia’s capacity to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters. This strategy recognises that disaster resilience is the collective responsibility of all sectors of society, including all levels of government, business, the non-government sector and individuals.

The **IFRC Framework for Community Resilience** (International Federation of Red Cross) recognises that resilience can be observed and strengthened

at multiple levels from the individual and household level to the community, local government and national level and at regional and global scale. The framework recognises that being resilient includes being flexible in the face of changing risks, and climate change is increasingly influencing risk patterns everywhere therefore climate change considerations are an integral element of the Framework for Community Resilience (FCR). The framework identifies that communities are complex and dynamic and so are the vulnerabilities that challenge them. There are many factors that influence community resilience (e.g., physical, human, financial, natural and social aspects of life). These factors are also interconnected, which requires that they be considered and understood holistically, through a multi-disciplinary approach which takes account of how factors influence one another. The IFRC has focused on learning more about the characteristics of a resilient community as a means of better understanding this complexity by listening to communities’ own experiences of resilience.

Emergency Management Victoria’s Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management (2017) has two focus areas. The first community, which is at the centre of all emergency management activity in Victoria. The second is the emergency management sector itself. At the heart of the Framework are seven resilience characteristics that emergency managers should aim to strengthen and encourage in communities. These characteristics are: Connected, inclusive and empowered; Sustainable built and natural environment; Reflective and aware; Culturally rich and vibrant; Safe and well; Dynamic and diverse local economy; and Democratic and engaged.

FRAMEWORKS

The need for a coordinated, cooperative national effort to enhance Australia’s capacity to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters

—

Resilience can be observed and strengthened at multiple levels

—

Being flexible in the face of changing risks

—

Community is at the centre of all emergency management activity in Victoria

3. Approaches and programs

The NCFH review (2021) advocates a number of recommendations that could inform an efficient local approach. Whilst all twelve recommendations are relevant to this work the focus on partnerships and collaboration is the most significant to Harvesting Resilient Futures. Recommendation two in the report promotes a co-ordinated approach focusing on various aspects and stages of resilience building initiatives including development, roll-out and evaluation. The recommendation states that social capital forms a vital part of community resilience and while resilience may only be tested in times of adversity, resilience building initiatives need to be developed well prior to the anticipation of challenging events. The recommendation highlights that coordination and collaborative partnerships underpin successful preparedness. These recommendations will be further examined at the conclusion of this report.

A three year research study by the FRRR Supporting Community Led Approaches to Disaster Preparedness (2017) outlined a number of recommendations that support strategic, collaborative approaches to enhancing community led resilience.

- New structures and processes for collaboration and decision making that locate community members, emergency management agencies, local government, community sector organisations local groups and business as equal contributors. This enables building trust and shared understanding as well as opportunities to mobilise capacity and capability.
- Community-led disaster resilience building occurs within complex systems. The system thrives when there are diverse relationships, partnerships and alliances that work together in lateral rather than hierarchical ways. Resilience approaches need to be designed and implemented with a systems framework, acknowledging the complex array of relationships involved.



4. Collaborative approaches

There are few examples of collaborative approaches that have a strategic focus on resilience. The grey literature describes groups and committees that have come together as a result of a stress or extreme event based on recovery and some with more a focus on preparedness in a specific context such as fire or flood.

Following are examples of more localised collaborative approaches to resilience that could inform the development of the Harvesting Resilient Futures approach in Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires.

4.1 Ganawarra Shire Council Community Resilience Committee

Ganawarra Shire is located beside the Murray River, in the Loddon Murray region of Victoria. Ganawarra is three hours' drive from Melbourne with the main regional centres of Bendigo, Echuca and Swan Hill each about one hour away by road. The area boasts a diverse agricultural region. Its economic base is primarily agriculture, with some important concentrations of manufacturing. Agricultural activities include cropping, dairying, grazing, horticulture and viticulture. The main industries include agriculture, and dairy product manufacturing.

The Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) Community Resilience Committee (CRC) was formed as a recovery committee following floods in 2011. This committee then re-formed in 2018 due to dry seasonal conditions and subsequent drought. The committee pivoted in 2020 to include COVID 19 in resilience and recovery efforts. The CRC is made up of over 28 local, regional, government and non-government agencies with secretariat support and chair supplied through GSC. The GSC holds a Gannawarra Giving Account which is auspiced by the Northern District Community Health Service.

The CRC is founded on a collective action approach with the committee seeking opportunities to work together to build resilience across the GSC communities. The CRC aims to provide coordinated planning, support, programs and community resilience projects as well as implement relief and recover activities. The CRC action plan (2012 – 2025) outlines the aims of the partnership.

The current Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee Action Plan developed by the collaborative committee outlines ten key strategies to achieve the aims:

1. Support coordination of agencies, support relief and recovery
2. Engage communities in decision making, information sharing and communication
3. Maintain social links within communities and promote social inclusion and equity
4. Promote healthy communities and improve health and wellbeing
5. Improve local food systems to improve access to healthy foods and reduce food insecurity
6. Implement initiatives that better support children and young people
7. Support safer and more resilient communities
8. Restore and build local economies
9. Support the development of liveable communities
10. Support ongoing liveability and financial viability through environmental initiatives

Gannawarra Community Resilience Action Plan 2021-2023

Implementing this Gannawarra Community Resilience Action Plan is being overseen by the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee, a partnership of 28 agencies working together to support the Gannawarra community.

The partnership aims to:



4.2 Tarnagulla Community Resilience Plan

Tarnagulla, located in Central Victoria's Golden Triangle, was historically a gold mining town, but now its predominant industry is agriculture. The town has a population of 133 people, surrounded by Box Ironbark forests and is at high risk from bushfires, droughts and storms. Without support, Tarnagulla township, like the 1,700 other small towns in Australia (approximately 9.7% of the total population) are at risk of disappearing due to reduction in population, deteriorating buildings, low economic prospects and climate risks. The Tarnagulla Community Resilience Plan (TCRP) [Tarnagulla Community Resilience Plan](#) was co-produced by the Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group (TAEG), the local community and support from the Victorian



Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and RMIT University. The plan was developed through a series of eight community workshops involving 230 participants in total. The project was divided into three phases:

- i. An increase in awareness, trust and participation
 - a. Establishment of a Project Leadership Group made up of members of already established and trusted TAEG.
 - b. Defining the concept of resilience in the local context
- ii. Community identification of strengths, challenges, adaptabilities and adaptive capacities to identified climate scenarios
 - a. Understanding the towns existing strengths and assets
 - b. Understanding the general challenges faced by the community
 - c. Conducting vulnerability assessments to climate related challenges
- iii. Development of a resilience action plan
 - a. Using The three Horizons (International Futures Forum) where Horizon 1 (H1) is the dominant present system – “business as usual”, Horizon 3 (H3) is a radically different future than that presented in H1 and Horizon 2 represents the process of transitioning from H1 to H3 over time.
 - b. Development of plan and scenario testing with community

The following actions were prioritised by the community to achieve their vision:

1. Facelift for Tarnagulla (physical capital)
2. Boost the local economy (economic capital)
3. Establish reliable sources of energy (physical and economic capital)
4. Strengthen community spirit (social capital)
5. Improve access to health services, public transport and emergency evacuation plan

4.3 Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy and taskforce

The Goulburn Regional Partnership is one of nine Partnerships across the state, established by the Victorian Government, recognising that local communities are in the best position to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by their region. From Melbourne's northern growth corridor to the Murray River, the Goulburn region is renowned for its fertile soils, mild climate, good water resources and growth opportunities for population and business. Often described as the 'food bowl of Australia', agriculture underpins the economy, followed closely by manufacturing, health care and social assistance. Shepparton, the largest city in the region, is the primary location for health, cultural and higher education services. It, along with other towns including Yarrawonga, Euroa and Seymour, is culturally diverse and has a strong Indigenous population.

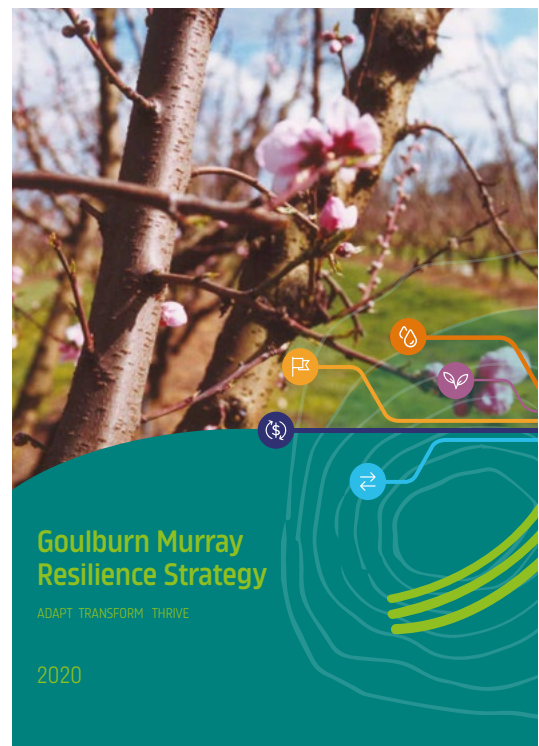
[The Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy](#) is a response to the drivers of change that are impacting that region. The Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy lays out eight Resilience Principles that will assist the region to better deal with change, and details a series of proposed interventions that will help address each principle. Importantly, the interventions will combine to produce a strategic, concerted momentum that will help take our region forward.

The strategy recognises that to build resilience, there needs to be shared influence and responsibility across the region. A community-driven Goulburn Murray Resilience Taskforce acts as custodians of the Resilience Strategy and coordinate our efforts to increase resilience.

The Taskforce is responsible for embedding resilience principles into governance structures and processes, and for catalysing, testing and scaling innovations up and out. It will monitor unintended systemic consequences and risks, and progress of the system towards a desired future.

The Regional Resilience Taskforce will not be a new standalone structure, it will be established under the three Regional Partnerships who cover the Goulburn Murray region. The Taskforce will provide a cross-cutting structure that complements their work and integrates and addresses the particular issues needed to deliver this regional resilience strategy.

The strategy acknowledges a shift from responding to shocks and events, to developing an understanding that enduring long term positive change can only be driven by looking more deeply at systemic structures and the patterns and process that these systems have set up. It states that the region simply must move from a 'persistence' mindset, to an 'active adaptation and transformation' mindset



4.4 Building Resilience to Disasters (Queensland Government Guide)

The Queensland Government [Building resilience to natural disasters collaboration guide](#) provides practical guidance focusing on collaboration, partnerships and learning through knowledge sharing as being fundamental to the disaster management tenet of shared responsibility. The guide provides guidance on how to establish collaborative groups across stakeholders to advance locally-led resilience. It draws on some theory, and links activities to Queensland's disaster resilience policy framework. It reflects 'on the ground' experiences in designing and preparing Queensland's pilot regional resilience strategies in partnership with local stakeholders under Resilient Queensland: Delivering the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2018–2021. The guide has been drafted with a resilience to natural disaster lens, however the principles and actions can be applied to build resilience in any network.

The guide has a strong focus on shared responsibility and building collaborative relationships and shared understanding before a disaster ensues. The guide highlights that collaboration across boundaries, disciplines and industries to stand together to build resilience, sharing local knowledge for the benefit of a catchment-wide community reaps greater rewards than spending after the event. Harnessing the capability of on-the-ground networks of people — formal and informal undertaking committed action for collective benefit builds strong connected and resilient communities which realise the vision of a community able to withstand natural disasters and bounce back together.

The guide takes the reader through broadening and understanding of the value of collaboration through theory and practical examples with tips to designing collaboration. This also includes understanding the barriers to collaboration such as culture of individualism, being heard, participation, change fatigue, capacity and commitment. The guide presents a tool kit which centres on collaboration culture, collaboration activities and partners in collaboration. The case study around the Cooloola Coast Community convened by local government brings together traditional emergency and community sector organisations to showcase how working together can achieve positive community outcomes.

FOCUS OF LOCAL APPROACHES

Community led with participation from cross sector organisations.

—

Moving from a focus on responding to shocks to long term positive change

—

Focus on collaboration and partnerships

—

Participatory, place based, systems approaches

—

Establishment of networks for learning and action

4.5 The Community Collaborative for Resilience (The Collaborative)

This new entity, [The Community Collaborative for Resilience](#), is in formation and development stage with SGGPCP being one of the founding partners alongside the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, Victorian Council of Social Service, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and Emergency Management Victoria. The Collaborative recognises the efforts being made by community and the need for a collaborative hub to connect, share and learn.

The Collaborative recognises that climate change, extreme weather events and social and economic impacts are leading to increased complexity, instability, and uncertainty in the way we live. By working together, combining our strengths, and supporting community-led resilience, communities can build the resources and expertise they need for a healthy and sustainable future.

The Community Collaborative for Resilience (the Collaborative) will be a go-to hub for communities, and supporting organisations, to connect to one another, share knowledge and resources and join collective discussions regarding disaster and climate change resilience.

It will amplify community strengths and needs and support learning and collaboration across sectors, regions, and communities.

Currently under development, the Collaborative will help people to:

- Connect to each other and other communities
- Navigate and access existing information, tools, and resources
- Share and gain knowledge, expertise and insights
- Build relationships and collaborate for change

A cross-sector steering committee is providing advice on foundational activities, including:

- An organisational model and partnership framework
- An interactive webspace to enable what we do
- Networking and knowledge sharing opportunities

Avenues for co-design and ongoing community engagement will further inform the Collaborative's activities and help to drive broader systems change and improvements in community-led resilience approaches and practice.

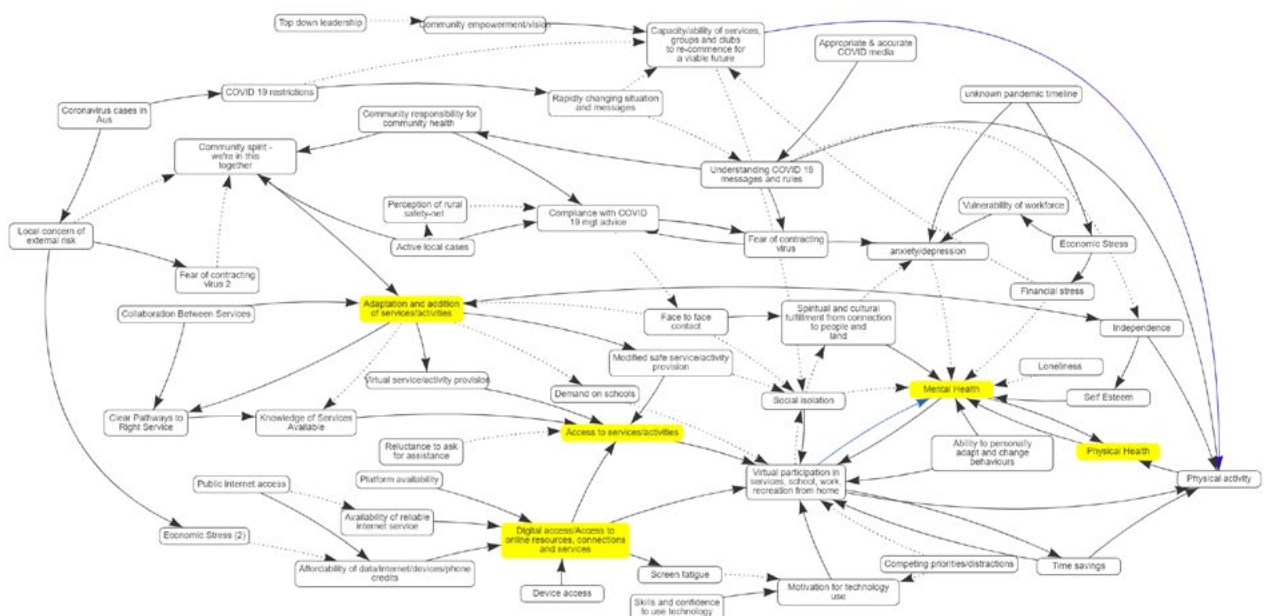
Still in the very early foundational stage, this Community Collaborative could provide a platform for connecting local work to others around the state.



4.6 SGGPCP Collaboration for Community led Resilience (COVID 19)

SGGPCP recognised that the resilience of the Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities in South West Victoria in the face of COVID 19 could be strengthened by organisations having collective knowledge and advocacy of the needs of the community. The leadership platform of SGGPCP alongside the established network of trusted relationships, local knowledge, agility and adaptability were key assets that enabled SGGPCP to lead a local collaboration. An existing network, RASnet (Rural Adjustment and Support Network) was established by SGGPCP in 2006 for cross sector organisations to be networked and align their support efforts for the community in response and recovery to drought. This group has continued post drought to maintain relationships to monitor and support our rural communities through any key changes it was facing.

RASnet was broadened and accelerated in recognition of the value of the existing relationships and structures to collaborate local efforts to enhance community resilience in response to COVID 19. The network was renamed to represent the current situation to Collaboration for Community Resilience (COVID 19)- C4CR. The C4CR network created a forum for sectors to come together and discuss impacts of COVID 19 on community and develop a greater understanding of the system at a time when organisations were facing enormous challenges (see Figure 1 below: map of system created by the group). Participation was not limited to traditional health and wellbeing organisations but promoted cross sector participation. As a result, the Network was also well attended by Rural Financial Counselling Services, Local Government Business Support and Emergency Relief organisations, such as Red Cross. This broad participation provided a deeper and richer understanding of the local impacts (social isolation, digital access, service access, economic impacts and impacts on mental and physical health) of COVID 19 on our local community. One output of the group was to develop a [Social Recovery Advice document](#) to support local recovery. This document outlines four pillars for action: Accessible activities and services, Resourceful, Connected and Resilient Community, Reaching our Fullest Potential and a Safe and Well Community.



© Deakin University under license to SGG PCP Project: Impact of COVID on SGG Created with STICKE software <https://sticke.deakin.edu.au>

Figure: 1 C4CR's systems map of Impact of COVID on SGG community

4.7 The Multi-cultural Emergency Management Partnership

The newly formed [Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership | VCOSS \(MEMP\)](#) is based on a collaborative community led model to strengthen existing relationships between multicultural communities and emergency services. The aim of the MEMP is to support emergency preparedness and resilience among migrant and refugee communities.

By employing a genuinely collaborative model, the MEMP is helping communities manage stresses and shocks — including emergencies — through a network of trusted, diverse and connected community leaders. The program includes the Victorian Council of Social Service and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, as well as 11 migrant and refugee community leaders, and representatives of at least 10 emergency organisations. The MEMP has recently developed a collaborative road map with six priority areas: Stronger relationships at a local level, Stronger understanding of local communities strengths and needs, Develop relevant, tailored emergency management plans and processes, Community to have access to simple and accurate information, Increased safety and inclusion within Emergency Management organisations, and Adapt recruitment and induction processes to increase workforce diversity.

5. Building a Local Understanding

5.1 Interviews

Throughout 2021 and early 2022, interviews were conducted with twenty five participants from across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires with representation from emergency Management, local government, non-government organisations, recovery and the community sector. The interviews sought to understand local perspective on resilience and individual and organisational role in resilience. Interviews were mostly held using zoom and face to face group and individual meetings.

Interviewees were asked a series of questions to ascertain their local perspective on resilience, the drivers of resilience and their organisational role (see Appendix 2 for list of questions). Responses to the interview questions have been collated and are presented in the table below.

A summary of the findings of the interviews and literature scan be found in Appendix 3.



Table 1. Summary of responses

Theme: Factors that contribute to resilience	
Community Connectedness and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of isolation Connected to others Have someone to turn to Sense of trust in neighbour Opportunities for connection Places for connection – hubs Opportunities for community participation – leisure, sport, leadership
Access to resources, services and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to information from a range of sources and in accessible language Knowledge of services and supports available Access to services (especially in rural settings) Localisation of services Access to skills and knowledge
Future Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared ideas and goals Sense of hope – not feeling stuck Forward planning Can do attitude Sense of pride
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community champions Advocates Authentic leadership (not gatekeepers)
Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Inclusion Gender equity Recognition of vulnerability and potential vulnerability Tackling poverty
Theme: Organisational role/contribution	
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise language that cuts across sectors Common language Non jargon Align with end users
Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with current strategic planning frameworks Alignment with job roles and outcomes Shared outcomes
Identify role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to understand identified alignment with work roles and organisations Understand the local issues so can identify roles

5.2 Developing a Shared Understanding – Group Model Building

There are a number of local organisations implementing activities that contribute to community resilience. Most recognise the links to resilience and identify their work as resilience focused while others use differing language and implement activities that are more focused on the co-benefits and/or the drivers of resilience such as community connection or leadership or service access.

Harvesting Resilient Futures recognises the many and varied contributions towards community resilience happening across the region however there is currently no central local collaborative platform to develop strategic approaches, share resources, understand and enhance local capacity, share learnings and experience and measure and evaluate.

Recognising the community resilience system is complex and therefore requires innovative participatory approaches to enhance action, Harvesting Resilient Futures brought together a diverse group to develop a shared understanding of the complexity of the local resilience system by using a Community Based Systems Dynamics method Group Model Building (GMB).

In 2015, SGGPCP partnered with the Global Obesity Centre (GLOBE) at Deakin University to challenge traditional approaches to a complex health issue-obesity prevention. Recognising that programmatic approaches were having limited success and that there was opportunity to innovate with a more collaborative systems approach, SGGPCP worked to build their local capacity in community based systems dynamics (CBSD) (Hovmand, 2014). One crucial characteristic of this method is Group Model Building (GMB) (Vennix, 1996) which is key to building a shared understanding and enabling action. The CBSD approach seeks to address the complex problems through a lens of managing time delays, considering multiple components of the problem that may be separated in time and space, and how those components may be affecting one another, amplifying problems or creating opportunities for actions (Richardson 2011). Systems dynamics recognises that the people with the power over the problem and that are affected by the problem must be key partners in modelling the problem and identifying solutions, and the set of practices involved in collaborating with stakeholders to understand complex problems together developed into a practice called GMB (J.A. Vennix 2016).

GMB involves working with a group of people through a set of structured activities (Hovmand et. Al., 2012) to identify the key parts of the problem, how they are connected as a system, and where the most powerful places to intervene may be. Research on GMB indicates that the process of modelling with stakeholders to understand and act on problems using systems dynamics can lead to enhanced clarity of communication, new insights into problems, and consensus on where to act and shared commitment to action (Scott, Canva and Cameron, 2016).

The SGGPCP led project, [Primary Care Partnerships for Community Resilience](#) (2021) Primary Care partnerships for Community Resilience utilised the GMB methodology with three Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) to develop a shared understanding of the local climate and resilience systems and identify actions. Each PCP created very diverse systems maps and identified a range of actions (see [Primary Care Partnerships for Community Resilience](#))

Building readiness for the Harvesting Resilient Futures GMB workshops was essential to ensure engagement in the process and the solutions. The interview process along with participation in a range of resilience, drought and climate change networks (see Table 2) enabled the opportunity to build readiness locally as well as built understanding of broader approaches.

Developing a local, shared understanding of resilience.

—

Understanding local complexity, drivers and solutions.

—

Utilising participatory processes to develop a shared understanding of the local system.

—

Identifying actions, both at individual, agency community and collaborative level.

—

Creating backbone support mechanisms to continue momentum, connect and communicate.

Table 2. Resilience, drought and climate change networks which SGGCP participates in

Key Strategic Groups	SGGCP Role	Focus, benefits or achievements
Thriving Communities Partnership South West Victoria Chapter	Co-Chair Working Group	Partnership to bring business sector and social sector to-gether to create thriving communities by supporting self-forming partnerships for impact.
Community Resilience Community of Practice	Member	Focus on learning and sharing approaches, research and opportunities in regard to community resilience. Facilitated by Centre for Just Places.
Rural Adjustment Support Network – RASNet	Convenor	During 2020 this Group temporarily morphed into the Collaboration 4 Community Resilience for COVID-19. However this space is still held for broader impacts into the future.
Barwon South West Climate Adaptation Group- Local Champions group member and Project Control Group	Leading member and Project Control Group	Focus is on building cross sector relationships. Climate change events and other global issues will increasingly cause multisector disruption to business as usual. Preparing for these risks by building adaptive capacity is fundamental to developing resilience.
Wimmera South West DHHS & PCP Collective – including Rural and Regional Liveability	Member	Focus on a liveability framework and its implementation. SGGPCP co-hosted two large forums and was part of the sub-group supporting this work.
DHHS BSW Pandemic relief Committee	Member	Raising issues and sharing information regarding pandemic relief/response.
The Climate Change Exchange	Founding Member	Brings together research, policy and end users with a focus on climate change and climate justice.
The Community Collaborative for Resilience (The Collaborative)	Founding Member	While still in formation phase, this group consisting of LMCF, VCOSS, EMV, FRRR and SGGPCP/ BSWPHU worked intensively throughout the last year to set up a new entity to for communities to develop their own efforts to enhance long-term resilience with different types and levels of support when needed.
VCOSS Bushfire Recovery Outcomes Framework for Community Organisations	Co-design member	Working closely with VCOSS to develop the Outcomes Framework to then be used to measure (and plan for) the role of community sector organisations in bushfire recovery.
Resilience 'HotSpots' Community of Practice	Member	Focus on learning and sharing approaches, research and opportunities in regard to Heatwave and impacts on vulnerable people.
Deakin University Sustainable Health Network	Member	Initiative in Human Health and Environmental Change national research network.

Workshops

Two GMB workshops were carried out in June 2023 with a total of 12 participants representing a diverse range of services including Local Government, health, aboriginal health, women’s health and wellbeing, community sector organisations, neighbourhood house and Emergency Management. The activities for the workshops were structured to allow the group to contribute their reflections, knowledge and experience with time for individual reflection, small group and large group sharing. This process is a key to ensure equal participation and opportunity to share knowledge. The group investigated the factors that influence the resilience of our community using STICKE (Systems Thinking in Community Knowledge Exchange). Participants then discussed the connections between these factors and identified linkages.

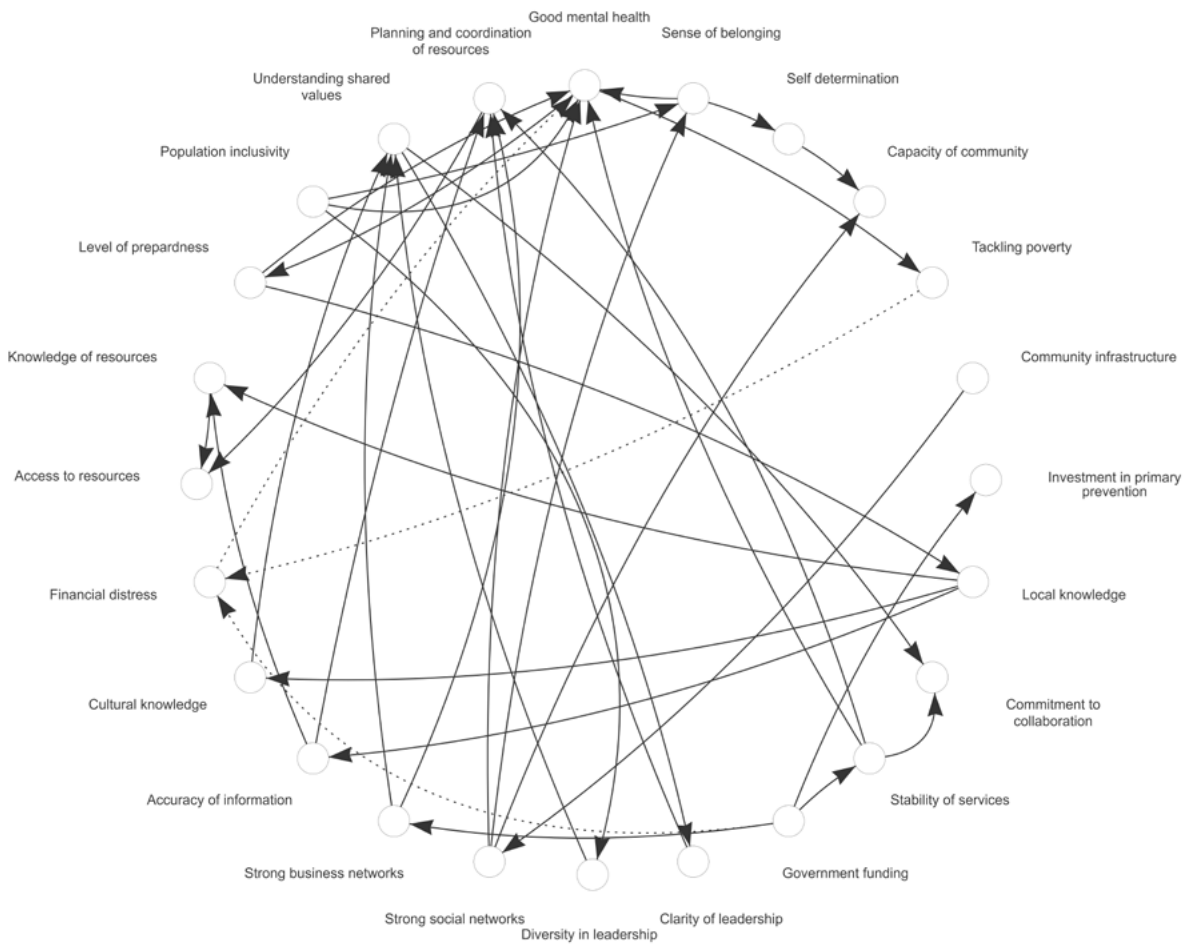


Figure 2: Snapshot of the connection circle during CLD development.

These included factors such as having strong social and business networks and agency collaboration. They identified the importance of local knowledge, cultural knowledge and shared values, diversity and clarity of leadership and many more. Behind every factor was a story of how this had changed over time and what the hopes and fears are for the future. The factors were documented around a circle and connections between the factors were added. For example, there was a connection between increasing agency collaboration and increasing government funding which in turn could increase commitment to collaboration and the stability of services. Increasing social connection links to mental health as does decreasing financial stress. Local knowledge connects with both accuracy of information and cultural knowledge.



Figure 3: Participants' comments highlighting some of the factors mapped

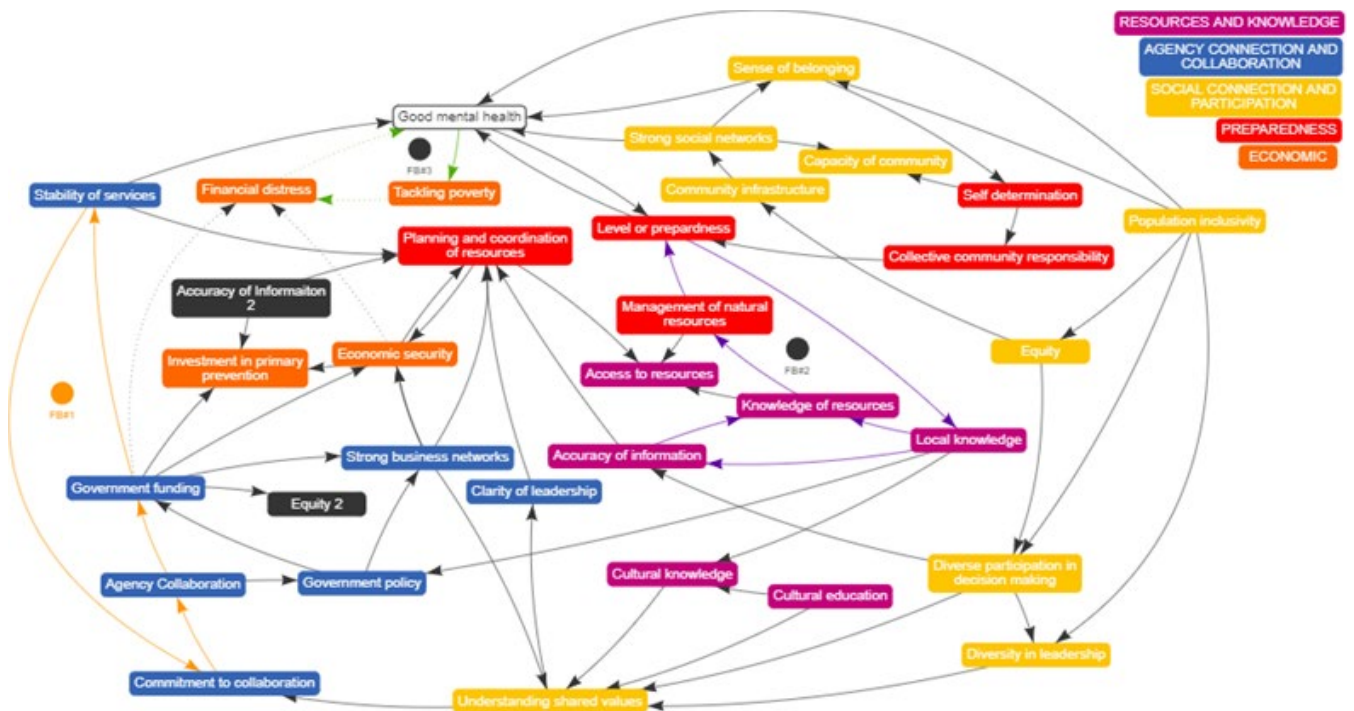


Figure 4: System map created by the group: The factors that influence the resilience of our community.

As a result of this process the participants created a visual map of the system based on their shared understanding of factors that influence the resilience of our community.

Whilst the map clearly shows the complexity of resilience and the multiple connections, the systems map was themed to enable ease to read the map and to assist when moving to actions. The blue theme referred to agency connection and collaboration and was seen as a key component of the systems map. Aside from the factors mentioned in the map, there were underlying conversations around limited capacity and the need for shared knowledge. This was also evident at the workshops with positive feedback reflecting the value of the opportunity to come together to share ideas.

The purple section of the map related to resources and knowledge with the yellow section focused on social connection and collaboration. Finally the red theme related to preparedness and the orange economic factors.

Participants returned for a second workshop to review the systems map and identify opportunities for action. Participants examined the map and considered where actions were already happening and when they thought there were priority areas for action. Participants were encouraged to consider but not limit their action ideas to feasibility using the feasibility matrix supplied by Deakin University.

Prioritising Action Ideas

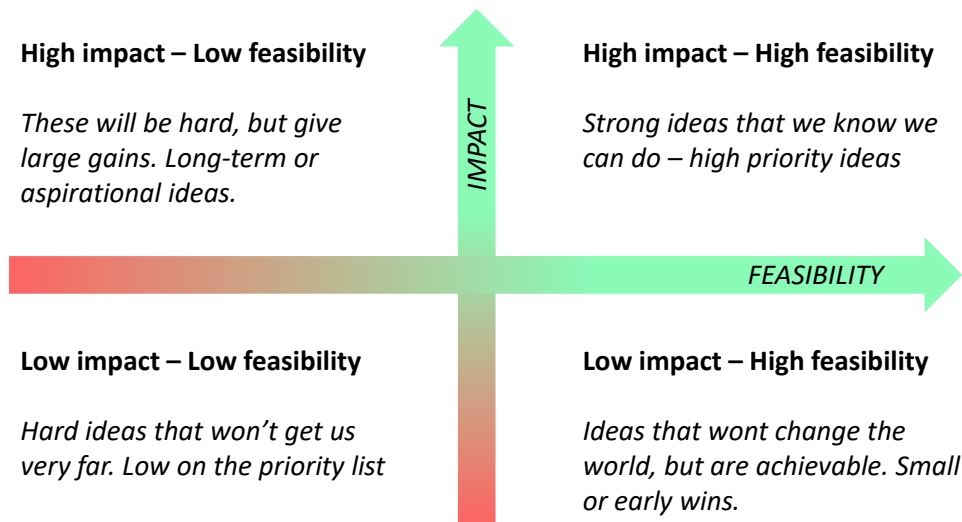


Figure 5: Feasibility Matrix (GLOBE, 2021)

Resulting action ideas included:

- **Agency collaboration:** develop a cross sector group with emergency management, health and community sector organisations that include community engagers and connectors representing local stakeholders.
- **Community Connection:** Build community connection opportunities that are inclusive, accessible and create a sense of belonging.
- **Local solutions:** Facilitate community workshops to engage people in generating solutions and driving local action.
- **Inclusion and access:** Build local skills in inclusion and access including active listening so that organisations can achieve more authentic and diverse engagement.





A third workshop in September mapped the proposed priority actions into the systems map. Using STICKE functions to tag factors that align with actions and identified stakeholders, participants were easily able to identify how the actions link back into the map created in workshop 2. A summary of the GMB workshops can be found in Appendix 4.

Action 1: Community Connectors Network

The group identified the need for ongoing connection between stakeholders who work closely with community and have local knowledge of community stressors, capacity and capability as well as assets and champions. A Community Connectors Network would provide the opportunity to not only learn and share but to connect work opportunities and collaborate. The map at Figure 6 highlights the main factors in the systems map that lead into this action including local knowledge, investment in primary prevention, economic security, accuracy of information and agency collaboration for example.

A similar group was previously convened by Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership in response to the millennial drought and was very successful bringing a diverse cross sector group together and resulted in the development of strong relationships that could then be called upon in an emergency situation or prevent community stressors escalating. This group remained connected post drought as they saw great value in continuing to connect and changed its focus to rural support and renamed to be the Rural Adjustment and Support network (RASNet). These established connections enabled the group to pivot the focus during the COVID 19 Pandemic to become the Collaboration for Community Resilience.

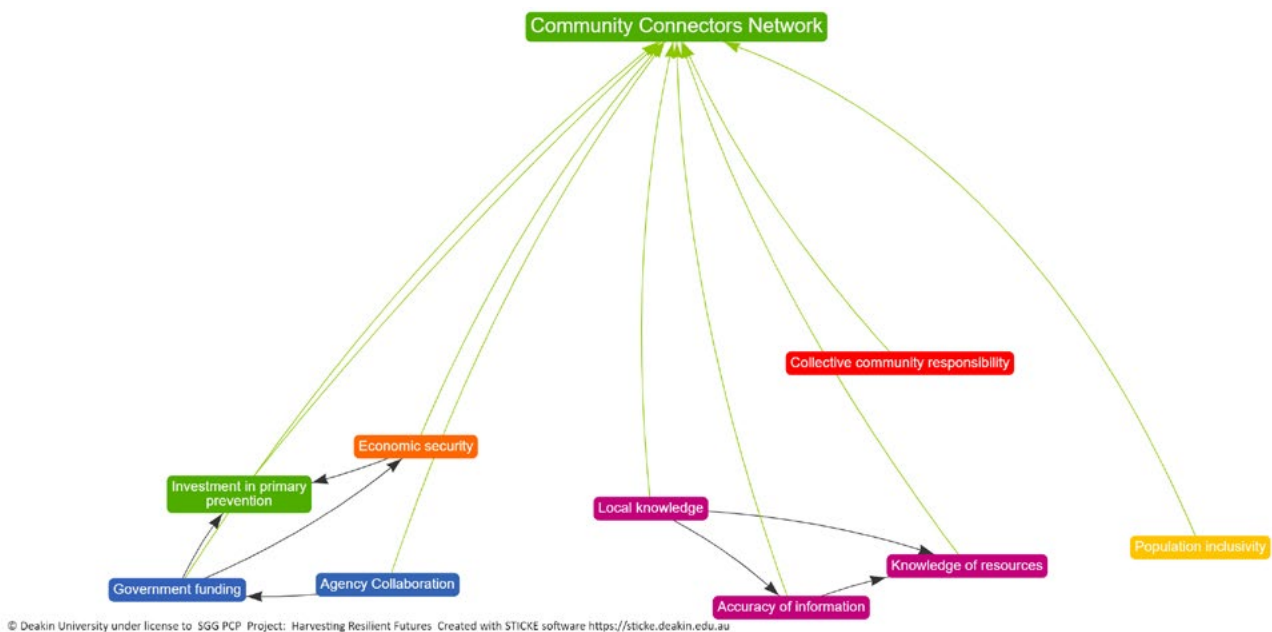


Figure 6: Action 1 Community Connectors Network systems map

The Community Connectors Network held their inaugural meeting post GMB 2 in August and again in October 2023. The first meeting saw a small but enthusiastic group connect and share and resulted in projects between Hamilton Community House and SES, valuable connections between SES and Southern Grampians Shire to further flood planning with small communities and connections with Women’s Health to further gender equality throughout the region.

Action 2: Community Connection Activities

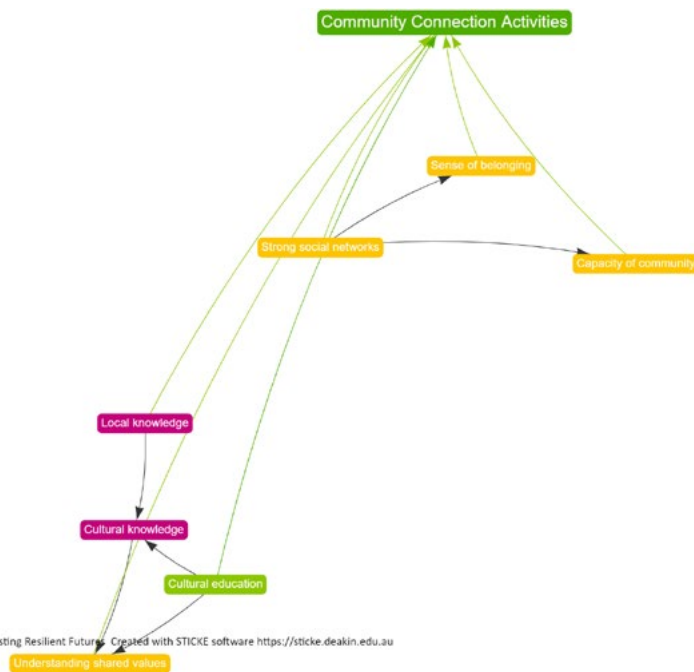
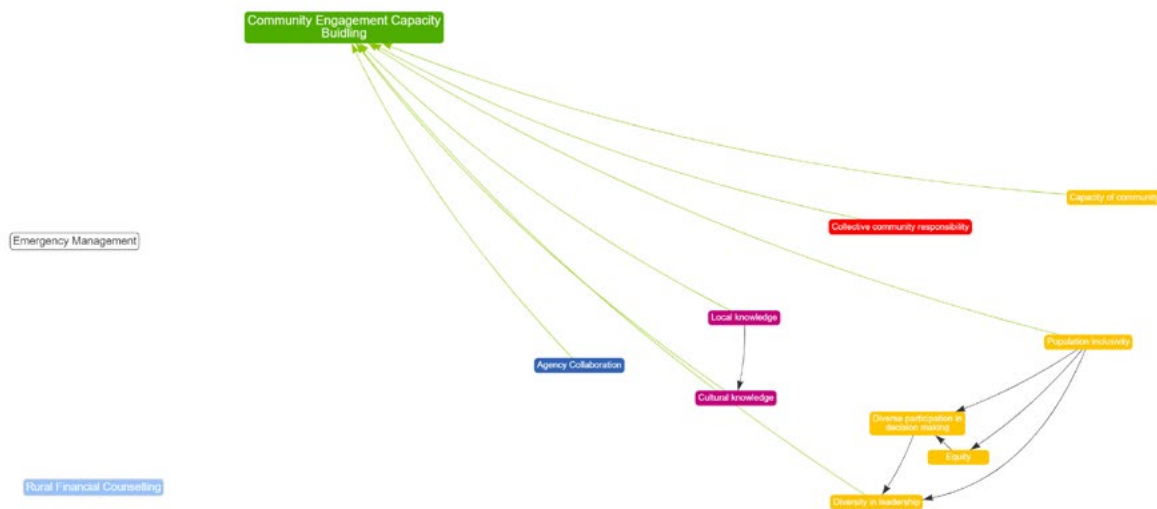


Figure 7: Action 2 Community Connection Activities systems map

Community Connection Activities – Project Report Summary

<p>Project Name: Launching Youth HQ: Connecting community by growing a positive future Lead: Casterton Memorial Hospital</p>
<p>Project Description</p> <p>We will use the upcoming Youth HQ Launch in late 2023 as a platform to Connect Community. An upcoming launch of a new youth space in Casterton is the perfect opportunity to bring all of community together and work on harvesting a resilient future.</p> <p>A series of Community Connection Activities will be provided in 2024 following the launch, bringing community together to build a strong social network and foster a sense of belonging. Using local knowledge (of art, cooking, music, games, skill development and good mental health and wellbeing) we will establish networks and build capability and resilience in an inclusive, equitable manner. This will lead to understanding shared values and commitment to collaboration.</p>
<p>How the project links to community resilience</p> <p>The planned activities relate to several parts of the system map:</p> <p><i>Social Connection and Participation (yellow)</i>: build a strong social network, sense of belonging, inclusive, equitable, understanding shared values</p> <p><i>Agency connection and collaboration (blue)</i>: commitment to collaboration</p> <p><i>Resources and Knowledge (purple)</i>: local knowledge</p>
<p>Partners and Stakeholders involved</p> <p>Health, local government, community members and volunteers, service clubs, neighbourhood house, men’s shed, emergency services, schools, early childhood, local businesses, sports clubs</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social connection (community participation) • Identification of community champions/leaders/mentors • Access to resources, services and information • Intergenerational knowledge and skill sharing • Improved planning and coordination of resources

Action 3: Community Engagement Capacity Building



© Deakin University under license to SGG PCP Project: Harvesting Resilient Futures. Created with STIOKE software <https://stioke.deakin.edu.au>

Figure 8: Action 3 Community Engagement Capacity Building systems map

Community Engagement Capacity Building – Project Report Summary

Project Name: Engage for Impact!

Lead: Western District Health Service

Project Description

We will develop and run local forums/workshops to increase community engagement skills to ensure active listening and participation of diverse groups in community engagement processes. The workshops will be co-designed with facilitators and a steering group and are scheduled for February and April 2024.

We will collect feedback and identify potential actions to increase local capacity post workshops.

How the project links to community resilience (refer systems map)

The planned activities relate to several parts of the system map:

Social Connection and Participation (yellow): diverse participation in decision making, sense of belonging, build resilience, social connection, understanding shared values

Agency connection and collaboration (blue): government funding opportunities for place-based ideas, capitalise on community strengths

Resources and Knowledge (purple): knowledge of and access to resources, capacity to deal with adversity, cultural knowledge and education, cultural value and greater acceptance

Preparedness: making the best use of existing infrastructure and local assets

Economic: investment in prevention and intervention rather than high cost crisis

Partners and Stakeholders involved

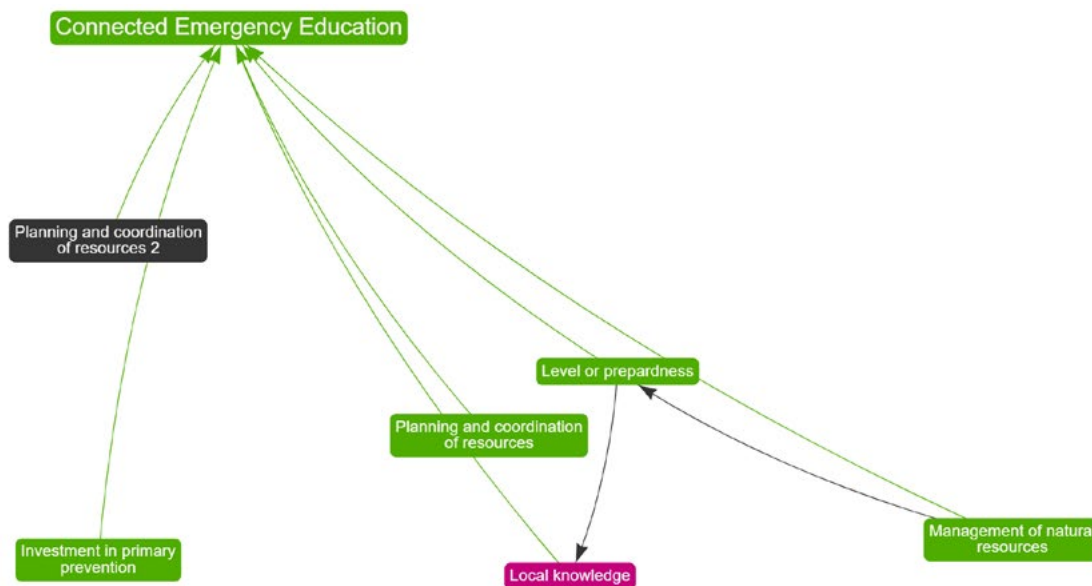
Health, local government, community members and volunteers, youth services and network, emergency services, community house, women's health and wellbeing, farmer health, ACCHO, schools, sports clubs

Expected Outcomes

- Increased capacity of community and enhanced community engagement particularly with under-represented target groups (diversity, equity and inclusion)
- Identification of place-based ideas, community strengths and prioritisation of sustainable action
- Increased knowledge and strategies to ensure diverse participation in community engagement in decisions and ideas that affect them (co-design)
- Increased interagency collaboration to share resources and ideas and avoid duplication
- Greater resourced members and motivation to improve community resilience

Action 4: Community Emergency Education

The Emergency Management Sector noted the opportunity to connect more with a specific focus on education locally. Whilst this sector have operational planning meetings and structures in place, there is a gap in building an educators network locally. This action is still in development with local emergency education providers.



© Deakin University under license to SGG PCP Project: Harvesting Resilient Futures Created with STICKE software <https://sticke.deakin.edu.au>

Figure 8: Action 4 Community Emergency Education systems map

A summary of the actions can be found in Appendix 5.

Evaluation

Workshop Evaluation: Mental Models

What are mental models?

The evaluation was designed to investigate the change in participants' mental models after participating in GMB 1 and 2 of the workshop series. Mental models are an internal conceptual representation of an external system (Doyle and Ford 1998). The literature suggests that mental model change and mental model alignment are reported outcomes of GMB (Scott, Canvana and Cameron 2016). Changing the way we think about the system is not easy and it is noted that mental models are enduring and resistant to change (Genter and Stevens, 1983). It is suggested that by changing mental models, GMB has effects that linger long after workshop participation (Scott et al., 2013).

How did we measure changes to mental models?

All participants were administered pre and post surveys to gather data to understand changes in mental models as a result of participation in the GMB process. The pre-survey was delivered at the beginning of GMB 1. The post survey is typically delivered at the end of GMB 2, however due to a large number of known apologies to the GMB 2 session, participants were offered the chance to complete a post survey at the end of GMB 1. The surveys analysed here include all pre surveys, and the post survey at their last point of participation in the GMB journey for each participant. We can infer that the results from this analysis would have been strengthened had more participants been available to engage in the entirety of the GMB series.

Participants were asked the following three questions in both surveys:

1. What factors influence the resilience of Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?
2. What are the consequences of low resilience for the Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?
3. What 3 actions would you recommend to enhance the resilience of the communities in Southern Grampians and Glenelg shires?

Ten participants completed the pre survey and 11 completed a post survey at either the conclusion of GMB 1 or GMB 2. Nine participants completed both the pre and post survey. Only results from the same participants who completed both the pre and post survey have been included in analysis (9).

Results

Part 1: Has the GMB process facilitated an increase in knowledge of causes and consequences of low community resilience?

The first part of this evaluation was to investigate if participating in the GMB workshops had increased participants knowledge about the influences on, effects of, and solutions to resilience across Southern Grampians and Glenelg.

a. Number of responses

The number of factors listed can be an indicator of increases in knowledge of the problem or change in the way of thinking about the problem due to participation in the GMB process. In this instance, there were no significant increases, or decreases, in the number of responses listed for any question of the survey.

A limitation to this is the use of bullet points numbered one to three on the survey form that potentially inhibited participants from listing additional responses. In future, the use of unnumbered bullet points is suggested to encourage unlimited responses.

Table 3. Number of responses

Question	Number of responses	
	Pre survey	Post survey
1. What factors influence the resilience of Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?	28	27
2. What are the consequences of low resilience for the Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?	26	26
3. What 3 actions would you recommend to enhance the resilience of the communities in Southern Grampians and Glenelg shires?	27	23

b. Sharing of knowledge

We sought to investigate whether the GMB process allowed for increases in knowledge around resilience; its causes, consequences and potential solutions. In addition to the number of responses recorded, we have further analysed these responses to see how much knowledge participants gained and shared from others in the room throughout the workshop series.

Responses to survey Questions 1 and 2 have been sorted into three themes;

- new responses compared to responses that were included in the pre survey
- responses that were new in the post survey but appeared in other participants' pre-surveys, indicating shared knowledge
- responses given in the post survey that were the same as the pre survey

Of these categorised responses, we then analysed the new responses for both questions one and two against the systems map to reveal that of eight responses that were deemed new, five (62.5%) appeared in the systems map. Please see Figure 9, highlighting variables within the Causal Loop Diagram (CLD) that were the same as new responses put forward in post surveys (8). These variables included; Population Inclusivity, Diverse participation in decision making, Understanding shared values, Level of preparedness, Investment in primary prevention, Economic security, Government funding and Stability of services.

Across both questions, the majority of post responses were either new, shared within the systems map or shared in others' pre-surveys. Pleasingly, 55% of post responses to Question 1 were new or shared. Similarly, 50% of post responses to Question 2 were new or shared.

These results indicate that participation in the GMB process improved individual knowledge about community resilience across Southern Grampians and Glenelg, through both peer sharing and learning and development of the CLD.

Participation in the GMB process improved individual knowledge through peer learning and development of the CLD

Table 4: Sharing of knowledge

Survey question	Same # of responses, % of responses	Shared (present in others pre-surveys) # of responses, % of responses	New # of responses, % of responses and number of new responses present in systems map	Total # responses
1. What factors influence the resilience of Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?	12, 44.4%	10, 37%	5, 18.5% — Of 5 new responses, 4 (80%) were present in systems map	27, 100%
2. What are the consequences of low resilience for the Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities?	13, 50%	10, 38.5%	3, 11.5% — Of 3 new responses, 1 (62.5%) was present in systems map	26, 100%
Questions 1 & 2 combined	15, 34.9%	20, 46.5%	8, 18.6% — Of 8 new responses, 5 (62.5%) was present in systems map	43, 100%

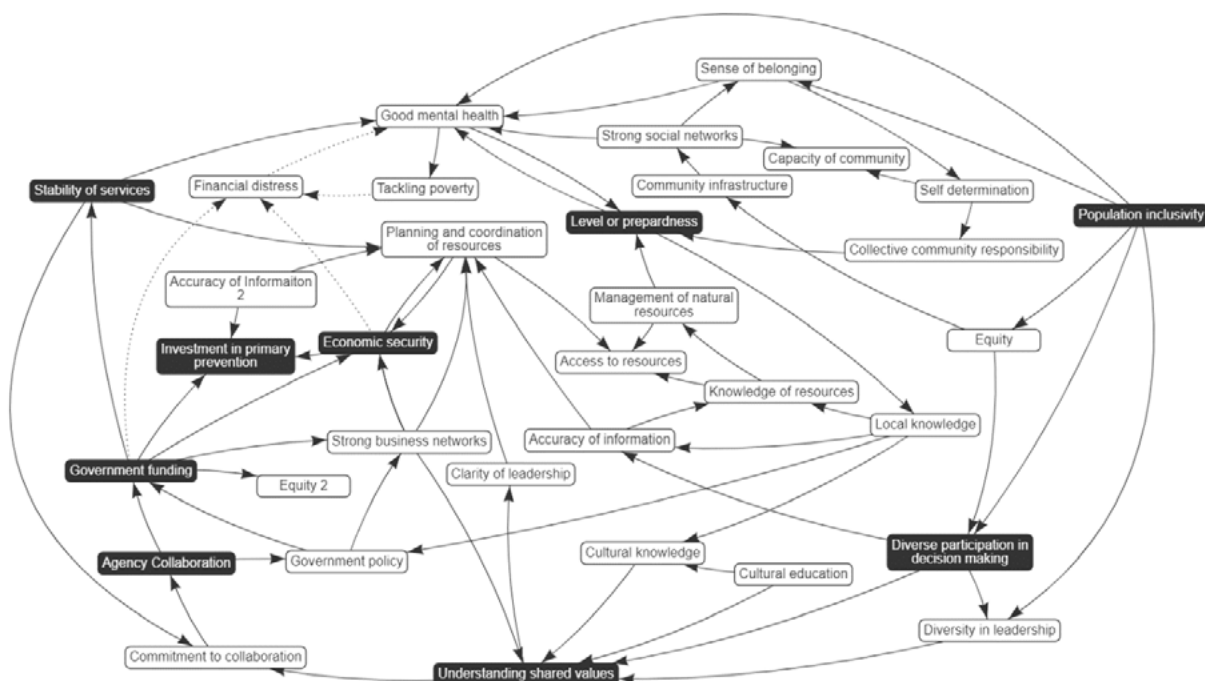


Figure 9: New responses within post surveys that were also identified as variables within the CLD

Part 2: Has the GMB process shifted the way participants think about and address community resilience?

The second part of this evaluation was to investigate if participating in the GMB workshops had changed the way participants thought about the influences on, effects of, and solutions to resilience across Southern Grampians and Glenelg.

a. Individual vs community ownership over influences on community resilience

Responses to Question 1 of the survey only have been sorted into three themes as listed below depicting a hierarchy of control from factors that are seen as out of the individual's control through to those factors that may be within the power of participants to control;

- Factors influencing resilience deemed outside of individual control
- Factors influencing resilience that individuals are deemed to have some control over
- Factors influencing resilience that are deemed within an individual's control

Results indicate that after the GMB workshops there was a change in the way participants thought about the issue of community resilience, from it being the responsibility of an individual, towards it being a community owned and influenced issue.

The number of factors influencing the resilience of SGG that were deemed to be outside of an individual's control and the number of factors that individuals have some control over increased, whilst the number of factors that were determined to be solely within an individual's control decreased.

Participation in the GMB process increased the level of community responsibility for community resilience

Table 5: Degree of individual control over factors influencing community resilience

Degree of control	Pre-survey # of responses, % of responses	Post- survey # of responses % of responses
Factors influencing resilience deemed outside of individual control	6, 21.4%	11, 41%
Factors influencing resilience that individuals are deemed to have some control over	13, 46.5%	10, 37%
Factors influencing resilience that are deemed to be within an individual's control	9, 32.1%	6, 22%
Total	28, 100%	27, 100%

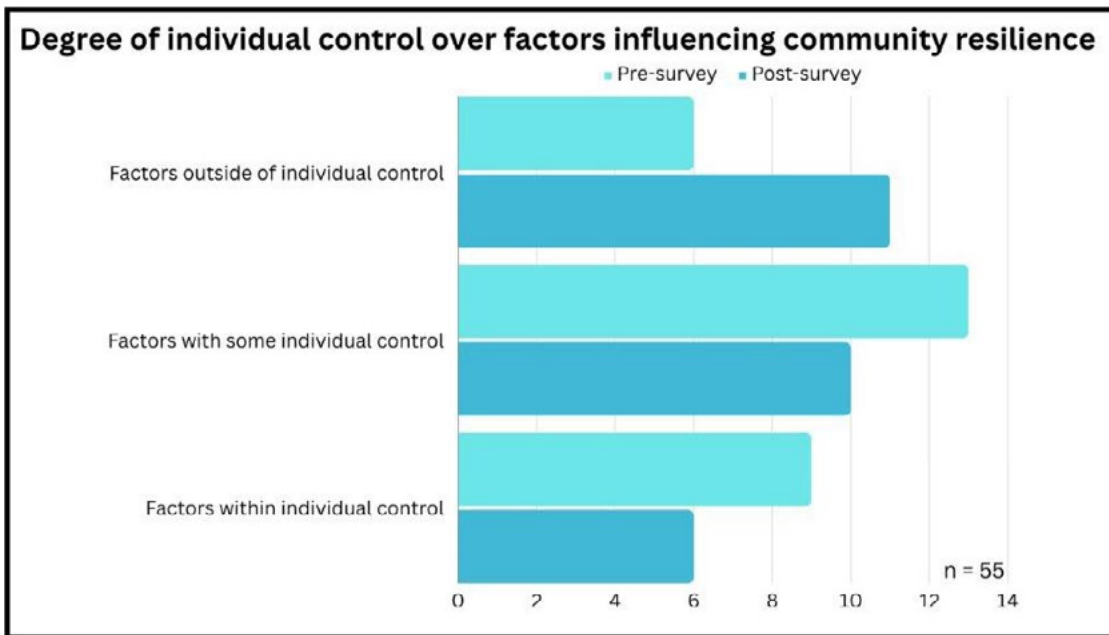


Figure 10: Degree of individual control over factors influencing community resilience

b. Local community vs external ability to implement solutions to improve community resilience

Responses from Question 3 of the survey only have been sorted into three themes depicting a hierarchy of control from proposed actions that are seen as outside the control of the local community through to actions that can be confidently executed by the local community;

- Suggested actions to improve resilience deemed outside of the local community’s control
- Suggested actions to improve resilience that the local community is deemed to have some control over
- Suggested actions to improve resilience that are deemed to be within control of the local community

Results from this section show a clear shift in the types of actions that were suggested to improve community resilience, towards more actions that the local community has control over. This indicates an increase in community ownership and perceived influence on community resilience as a result of the GMB process.

The number of suggested actions to improve resilience that were deemed to be within the control of the local community increased from 37% in the pre-survey to 61% in the post-survey. As little as one response was listed in the post-surveys that was deemed to be completely outside of the local community’s control.

Table 6: Degree of community control in proposed solutions to improve community resilience

Degree of control	Pre-survey # of responses, % of responses	Post- survey # of responses % of responses
Suggested actions to improve resilience deemed outside of the local community’s control	3, 11.1%	1, 4%
Suggested actions to improve resilience that the local community is deemed to have some control over	14, 51.9%	8, 35%
Suggested actions to improve resilience that are deemed to be within control of the local community	10, 37%	14, 61%
Total	27, 100%	23, 100%

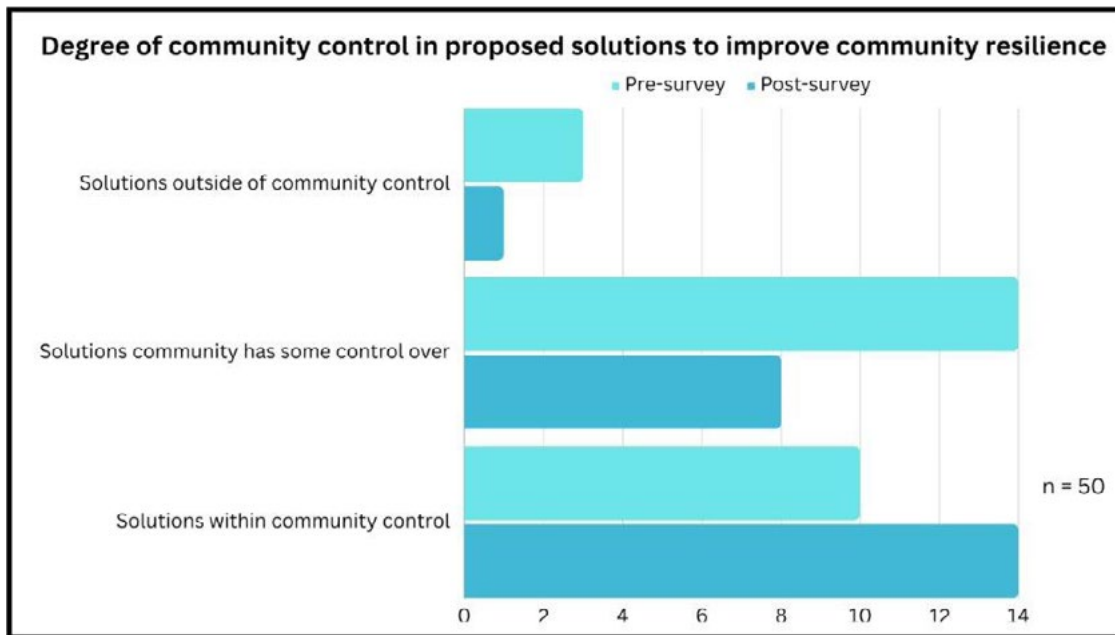


Figure 11: Degree of community control in proposed solutions to improve community resilience

Conclusion

This investigation of the GMB process's influence on participants' mental models is consistent with other research, showing a change to the amount of knowledge held and the way in which participants thought about the complex problem, enhancing a systems thinking lens.

When analysing the potential knowledge increase we found a strong indication of both new and shared knowledge, with over 50% of all post workshop survey responses being new or shared from within the group work.

When investigating whether the process changed the way that participants thought about community resilience and the ways it could be enhanced, we found a shift. This shift means that participants now see the issue of community resilience as more of a community owned and influenced issue. Participants' confidence in their local community to be the driver of actions to improve community resilience increased, indicating greater ownership of the issue at hand.

***The GMB process
increased
participants'
confidence in their
local community
to drive actions to
increase community
resilience***

Social Network Mapping

The National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) conducted ongoing evaluation of the funded projects throughout the project timeframe. As part of the Harvesting Resilient Futures Project, NCFH mapped networks and relationships as they grew throughout this project depicting three time points.

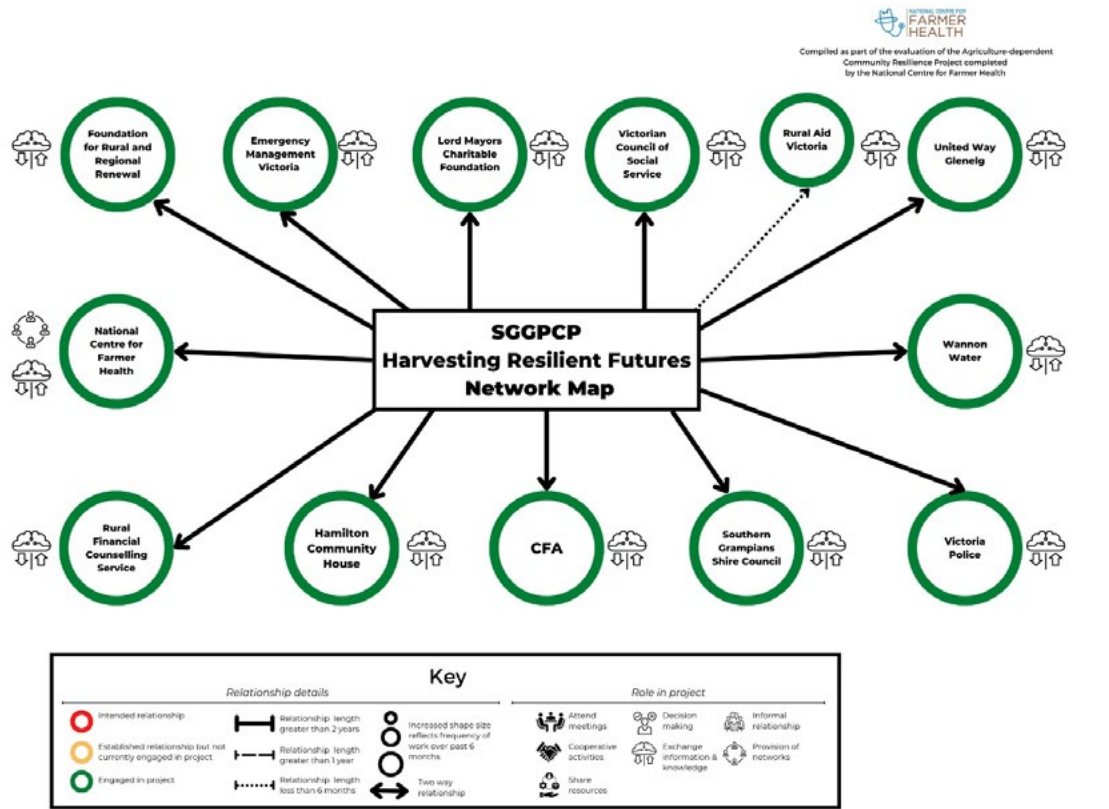


Figure 12: Social Network Mapping Time point 1

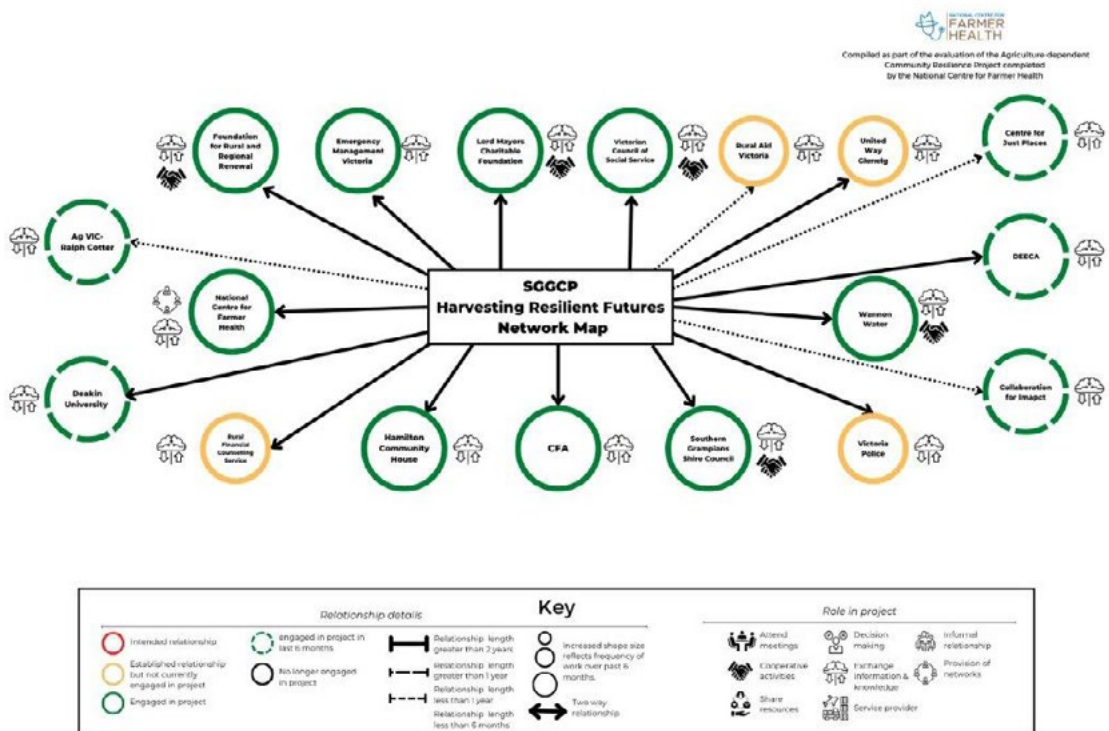


Figure 13: Social Network Mapping Time point 2

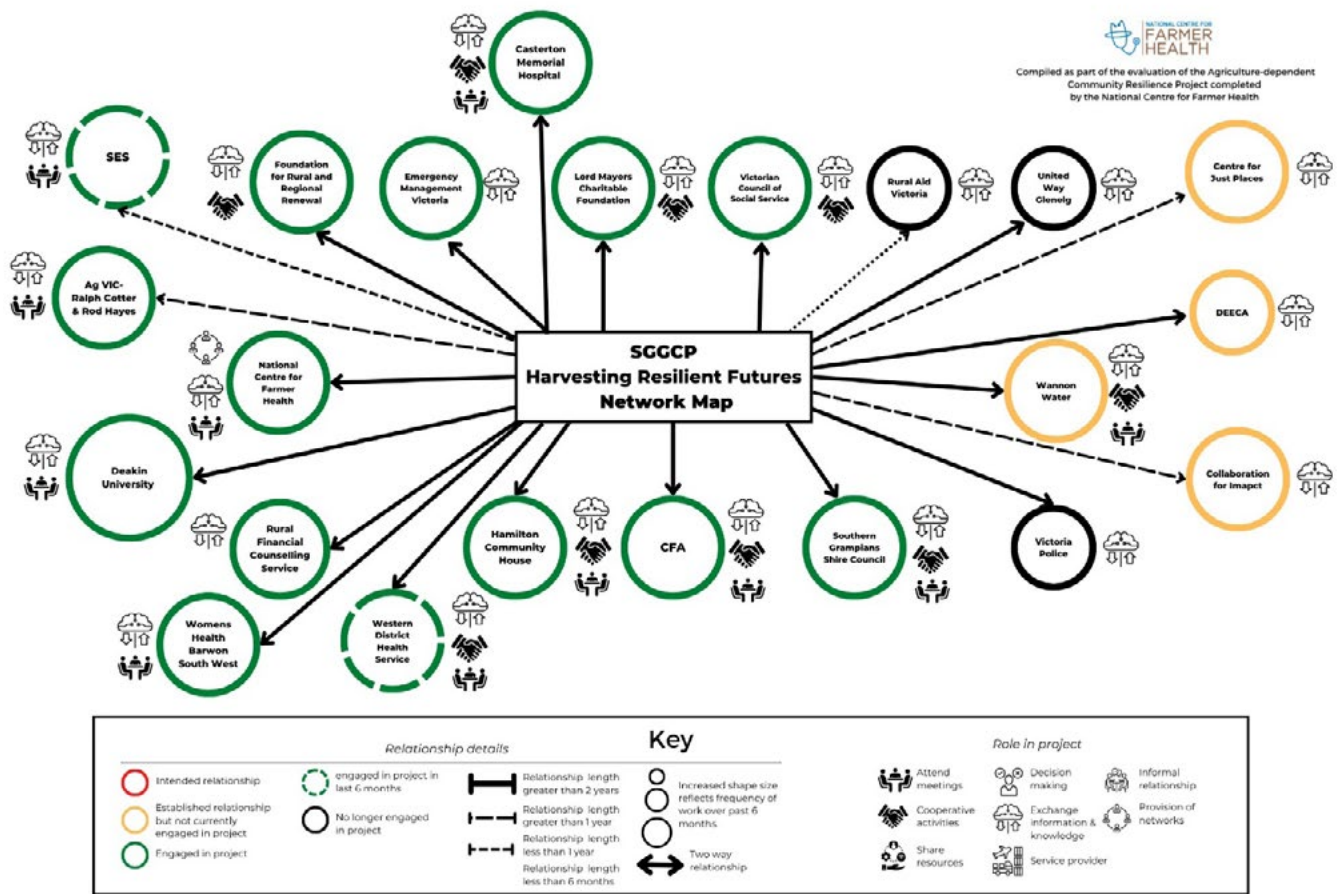


Figure 14: Social Network Mapping Time point 3

The Network Maps show the progression and change in stakeholder relationships throughout the project and the strength and type of relationship. Whilst not comprehensive, the maps indicate the increase in number of stakeholders as well as the complexity in the change of relationship from information exchange to cooperative activities.

Corresponding NCFH Recommendations

The NCFH review (2021) advocates a number of recommendations that could inform an efficient local approach. Whilst all twelve recommendations are relevant to this work the focus on partnerships and collaboration is the most significant to Harvesting Resilient Futures (NCFH Recommendations 1-2, 4-12).

NCFH Recommendation 1: Prevention Focussed

Harvesting Resilient Futures was designed to be prevention focussed rather than reactive to a particular situation. Additionally with a focus on community resilience, the factors that were discussed during the Group Model Building exercise were all very much aligned to a prevention focus – one factor that came up was investment in primary prevention highlighting the emphasis on prevention within this work, however other factors also exposed the need for a prevention focus including level of preparedness and planning for example. Factors centred on social connection, collaboration, local knowledge all had a prevention focus in mind. This was also highlighted through the proposed actions. Building local collaborative networks to continue to shape shared understanding and result in building partnerships that could facilitate action such as the basis for the identification of the need for a Community Collaborators Network. This network could potentially support for a wider range of rural communities through initiatives that can be tailored to the diversity of local needs (both current and anticipated).

NCFH Recommendation 2: A coordinated approach

The NCFH review states that coordination is required across the various aspects and stages of resilience building initiatives including development, roll-out and evaluation. Social capital forms a vital part of community resilience. While resilience may only be tested in times of adversity, resilience building initiatives need to be developed well prior to the anticipation of challenging events. Coordination and collaborative partnerships underpin successful preparedness. The aim of the Harvesting Resilient Futures Project was to bring together cross sector participants to understand the potential roles we can all play in resilience. An overall aim was to develop a more strategic approach acknowledging that a strategic approach would alleviate duplication of effort, provide opportunities for joined up approaches and a better understanding of each organisations role and the role of others. Whilst this aim is still relevant, the project did not get to this stage yet with participants focussed more on delivering activities and actions. The Community Collaborators network will be well places to move from more operational sharing and learning to a more strategic approach.

NCFH Recommendation 4: Place based Response

The NCFH review states that attempts to ‘import’ resilience building initiatives or implement practices homogenously across large geographic regions have not always been successful, with perceptions in many agricultural-dependent communities that ‘outsiders’ don’t understand farming life and work. Place-based approaches to resilience building attempt to ameliorate this challenge and can provide a range of advantages including: Capacity to target or tailor responses to local needs; Encourage ownership and engagement of the project or initiative; Draw on and encourage local and historical knowledge; and Support sustainability through communities becoming invested in local efforts. The project had a strong focus on a local approaches across Southern Grampians and Glenelg acknowledging that all communities have differing characteristics, assets and challenges. There is no “one size fits all” approach. The reference mode (investigation question) for the GMB workshops emphasised local community being, What factors influence the resilience of OUR community?, encouraging participants to think about their specific knowledge and experience with a local lens. Action ideas had a local focus encouraging a place based response. For example, one priority action identified through GMB #3 was to support social connection actions in Casterton that would be co-designed by young people during the launch of the Casterton Youth Space.

NCFH Recommendation 5: Targeted to the needs of specific populations

The NCFH review notes that resilience preparedness strategies need to be targeted to meet the needs of varying groups in agriculture-dependent communities. The programs identified in the NCFH review are mostly general in nature and may have missed opportunities to address the needs of those most at risk. Where interventions have been targeted and tailored to the needs of specific populations, positive results have been identified. Throughout the Harvesting Resilient Futures, consultations through interviews and focus groups and the GMB workshops ensured the majority of population groups existing within the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires were represented. This contributed to developing a shared understanding of resilience from a diverse range of participants who have an intimate understanding of their community.

NCFH Recommendation 6: Initiating and strengthening engagement

The NCFH review reports that prevention-focused resilience building often needs to be opportunistic and linked with existing events or activities that already bring agricultural communities together. This could also be considered in the context of developing skills in stakeholders and service providers who meet with farmers for business-related purpose. Providing space for connection and learning throughout this project has seen valuable relationships develop between stakeholders, particularly cross sector relationships. The GMB workshops highlighted the need for better community engagement and consultation to ensure we were inclusive, meeting the needs of diverse communities, building participation, understanding local knowledge and lived experience and developing local leaders. As a result, one action prioritised was to improve the capacity of the sector in community engagement. Western District Health Service will implement a series of Community Engagement capacity building opportunities early in 2024 to ensure we are strengthening community engagement.

NCFH Recommendations 7: Enablers for Support

The review reflects that enabling follow up actions for support is a promising strategy for strengthening resilience. Resilience initiatives should aim to develop networks between community members and service providers to enable rapport and relationship building. The actions identified for priority through the Harvesting Resilient Futures Project have a focus on building capacity (including networks) to enable support. Social Connection and access to services (information and support) were consistent themes throughout the interviews and the GMB workshops. Elevating these factors as linking strongly with community resilience was key to future actions beyond this project. The BSW PHU through facilitation of the Community Connectors Network will ensure these remain a feature of planning and action.

NCFH Recommendation 8: Prioritising Structured Monitoring And Evaluation

The NCFH review highlights that evaluation needs to be formalised as part of the planning process and not an after-thought. When developing the project, plan for monitoring and evaluation and include these project elements for funding. Additionally, while process evaluation can be helpful and informative, evaluation of outcomes is critical for establishing understanding of program effectiveness. The Harvesting Resilient Futures Project considered evaluation within the project design specifically with a focus on understanding change in participants way of thinking about resilience and their role and understating relationships and networks. The BSW PHU understands, through this project and consultation undertaken during strategic planning, that evaluation capacity could be improved across the whole of the Barwon South West Area and has prioritised the implementation of strategies to build capability across the region.

Given this project was centred on developing a shared understanding and working towards a strategic approach, the remaining five NCFH recommendations were not heavily reinforced throughout the project. It is likely that these recommendations will be more exposed during the actions undertaken as a result of the project. The other five recommendations were: A Sustainable Framework Peer To Peer Support Model For Intervention, Adaptive Models Of Intervention Delivery, Good Governance and Resilience-Supporting Resources.

References

- Aboutalebi Karkavandi, M., Coutinho, J., Sarwar, A., Brown, J., Lowe, J. (2021), *Making invisible Networks Visible: Understanding the Value of Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Swinburne University of Technology and Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership.
- Allender, S., Orellana, L., Crooks, N., Bolton, K., Fraser, P., Brown, A.D., Le, H., Lowe, J., de La Haye, K., Millar, L., Mooie, M., Swinburn, B., Bell, C. and Strugnell, C. (2021) *Four-year outcomes from a Cluster Randomized Whole of Systems Trial of Prevention Strategies for Childhood Obesity (WHOSTOPS) in Obesity* 2021 Jun; 29(6):10221035. doi:10.1002/oby.23130. Epub 2021 May 5.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics-- Annual Report, 2016-17 (abs.gov.au)
- Brown, J., Lowe, J., Rhook, E. and Brown, A. *Primary Care Partnerships for Community Resilience. A case study highlighting the role Victorian PCPs can play enhancing resilience*. Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership 2021.
- Council of Australian Governments (2011) *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: Building the resilience of our nation to disasters*. Commonwealth of Australia
- Doyle DK, Ford DN. 1998. *Mental Models concepts for system dynamics research*. System Dynamics Review 14: 3–29.
- Emergency Management Victoria (2017). Community Resilience Framework. from <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/CommunityResilienceFramework>.
- Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR) (2017) *Contemporary Research and Practice in the field of Community-based Disaster Resilience*. Prepared by Flinders University Torrens Resilience Institute.
- Genter D, Stevens AL. 1983. *Mental models*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Hillsdale.
- Glenelg Shire Council. Thriving Glenelg. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021 – 2025
- GLOBE Institute for Health Transformation Deakin University, 2021, *Connecting the Dots – Creating Solutions for Lasting Change. Training manual fundamentals in Systems Thinking and facilitation*
- Howard, A., Rawsthorne, M., Sampson, D. & Katrak, M. (2020) *Supporting community led approaches to disaster preparedness: learnings from three pilot locations. Evaluation of the Get Ready Disaster Resilient: Future Ready pilots for the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal and Resilience NSW*; University of Sydney and University of Newcastle.
- Hovmand, P. (2014). *Community Based System Dynamics* (1 ed.). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Hovmand, P. S., Andersen, D. F., Rouwette, E., Richardson, G. P., Rux, K., & Calhoun, A. (2012). Group Model-Building 'Scripts' as a Collaborative Planning Tool. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 29(2), 179-193. doi: 10.1002/sres.2105
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2014 IFRC Framework for Community Resilience)
- INTERNATIONAL FUTURES FORUM u.d. Three Horizons. u.d. ed. Scotland: <https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/three-horizons>
- Kennedy, A., Latham A., McKay C., Adams J., Kaspers S., Cotton J. and Brumby S. (2021) *Making a difference to farmers' lives Rapid Review: Agriculture dependent Community Resilience A report from the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH)*. Western District Health Service
- Richardson, G. P. (2011). Reflections on the foundations of system dynamics. *System Dynamics Review*, 27(3), 219-243. doi: 10.1002/sdr.462
- Scott, R. J., Cavana, R. Y., & Cameron, D. (2016). Recent evidence on the effectiveness of group model building. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 249(3), 908-918. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2015.06.078>
- Scott R. J., Cavana R. Y., Cameron D. (2016). Mechanisms for Understanding Mental Model Change in Group Model Building. *Systems Research & Behavioral Science*, 33(1), 100-118. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2303>
- United Nations. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- Vennix, J. A. (1996). *Group model building: Facilitating team learning using system dynamics* (Vol. 2001): Wiley Chichester.
- Wikibooks contributors, "Scriptapedia/Action Ideas," Wikibooks, https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=Scriptapedia/Action_Ideas&oldid=3478706 (accessed November 27, 2023).

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Harvesting Resilient Futures

Strengthening collaborative leadership across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires to enhance community resilience.

This work aims to build the resilience to stressors and shocks by establishing networks, building capability and aligning the efforts in Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities.

Strengthening social capital focussed on Community Resilience will support our community in preparing and adapting to stressors and shocks whilst improving overall mental health of the community.

This Project will result in our community designing and leading its own strategic path and place based actions that are responsive and flexible to their needs into the future. It is envisaged that this will be the catalyst and foundation to a long term strategic approach to improving Community Resilience in our region.

It is envisaged that this will be the foundation of a long term strategic approach to improving Community Resilience in our region.

For further information contact:

Jo Brown
Manager Health and Wellbeing
Southern Grampians Glenelg PCP
E: joanne.brown@wdhs.net
PH: 0428 310 280



Appendix 2.

Interview and Focus Group Questions

Introduction: About project and interview. Expected timeframes

1. What is your role and the current role and focus?

Understanding Local Community Resilience

2. Thinking about the communities that you work with, what do you think represents a resilient community– what does a resilient community look like to you - ie if you drove into a community what does it look like, what are some of the behaviours you see, the activities, outcomes...you think this community is going ok.
3. Why do you think this is happening – what sits behind these behaviours?
4. Think now about those communities you work with who you think are not so resilient - what does this look like to you - ie if you drove into that community what does it look like, what are some of the behaviours you see, the outcomes, activities ... you think this community is going ok. Why do you think this is happening?
5. Thinking about all this then, what do you think are some of the factors that contribute to resilient communities that you work with?
6. Can you think of local examples that represent resilience

Your sector

Understanding organisational and individual role

7. How does your role/org contribute to community resilience – or how could it (in an ideal world)?
8. Is this formalised through policy guidelines? Or more informal – assumed within your role or not really recognised – how? Examples
9. How do you talk about resilience in your sector? What is some of the language that you use?
10. For your sector to be involved and engage communities do you talk about resilience as a broad concept or resilience to a specific stressor (more focused)
11. Who else in your sector plays a role in community resilience? What other roles in the community that contribute?

Appendix 3.

Update

Harvesting Resilient Futures

Phase 1: Developing a Shared Understanding

- Literature Scan and rapid review
- Focus Groups and Interviews
- Community Based Participatory Processes (Eg Group Model Building)

The literature scan Key Themes:

A rapid review of fifteen frameworks and approaches was undertaken with the key themes drawn out:

- Collaborative relationships across cross sector boundaries
- Understand the complexity
- Mobilise collective action approaches
- Community led (with built community capacity)
- Locally led



Appendix 4.

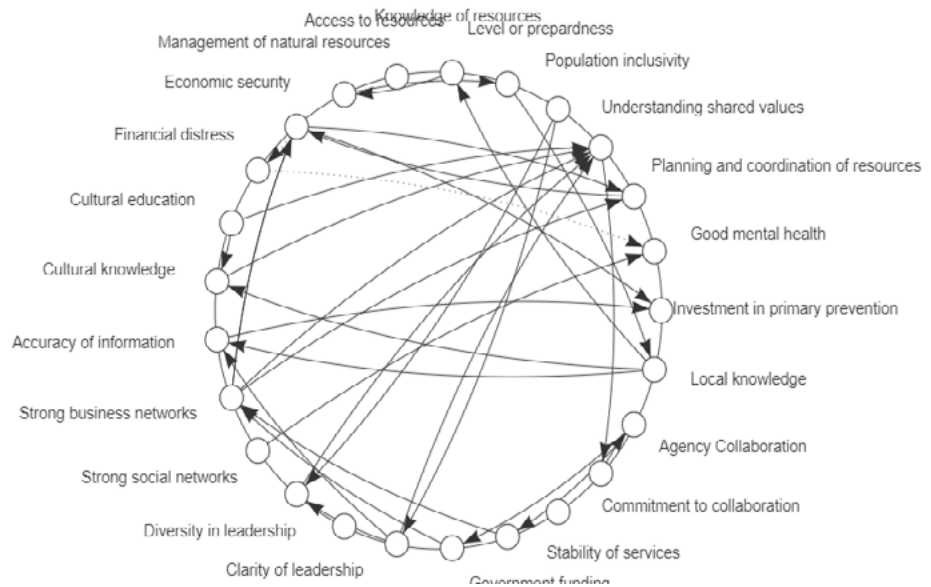
Harvesting Resilient Futures

Strengthening collaborative leadership across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires to enhance community resilience.

This work aims to build the resilience to stressors and shocks by establishing networks, building capability and aligning the efforts in Southern Grampians and Glenelg communities. Strengthening social capital focussed on Community Resilience will support our community in preparing and adapting to stressors and shocks whilst improving overall mental health of the community. This Project will result in our community designing and leading its own strategic path and place based actions that are responsive and flexible to their needs into the future. It is envisaged that this will be the foundation of a long term strategic approach to improving Community Resilience in our region. A review of the grey literature alongside interviews and focus groups has informed our understanding of community resilience and exiting frameworks. The Group Model Building Workshops provided the opportunity to further develop our shared understanding of local community resilience.

Workshop 1

In June 2023 an enthusiastic group came together to share their diverse knowledge and experience in a workshop to develop a shared understanding of the **factors that influence the resilience of OUR community**. Using Group Model Building the group created a map that represented the connections between the factors they identified.



The factors

Participants shared their stories relating to the factors that influence the resilience of OUR community. These included factors like having strong social and business network and agency collaboration. They identified the importance of local knowledge, cultural knowledge and shared values, diversity and clarity of leadership and many more. Behind every factor was a story of how this factor had changed over time and what our hope and fears are for it’s influence into the future.

The Connections

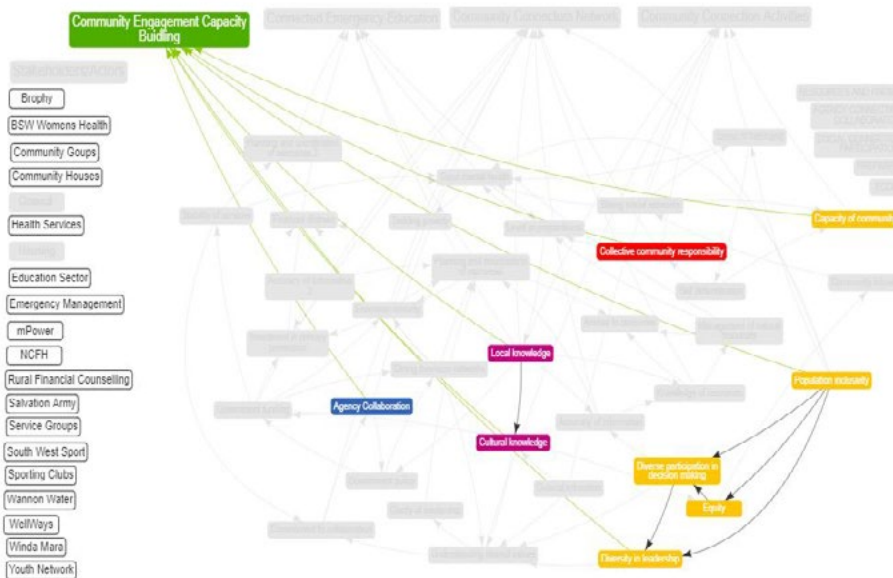
The factors were documented around a circle using STICKE software (Systems Thinking in Community Knowledge Exchange). Participants then discussed connections between these factors and identified linkages. For example, there was a connection between increasing agency collaboration and increasing government funding which in turn could increase commitment to collaboration and stability of services. Increasing social connection links to mental health as does decreasing financial distress. Local knowledge connects with both accuracy of information and cultural knowledge.

<p><i>“Diversity of community. With greater diversity we get a stronger community.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Commitment to collaboration of mitigation by agencies – working more collaboratively and with community”</i></p>	<p><i>“We need investment in primary prevention – looking at young people at the future, looking at how to respond to disaster from a prevention lens”</i></p>	<p><i>“Identify and articulate values people share. If we understand the values we share we can be stronger in collaboration”</i></p>	<p><i>“Social connection is so important. We need to ensure there are opportunities for participation and diversity in our leadership”</i></p>
---	---	--	---	--

Appendix 5.

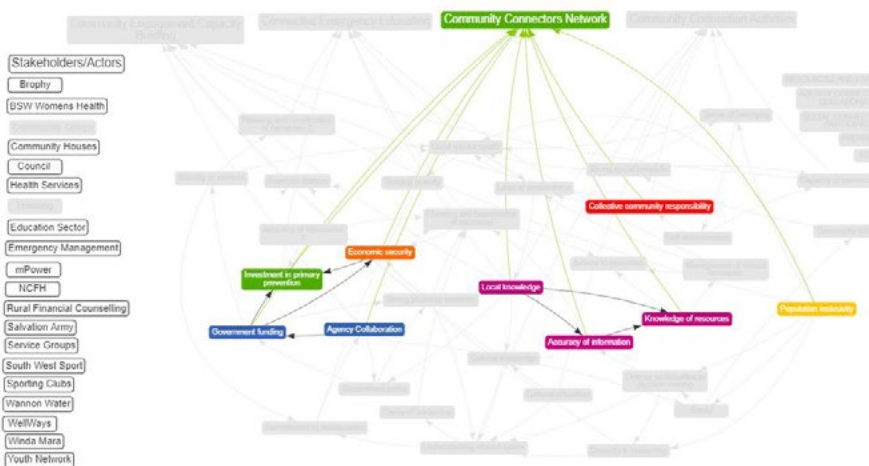
This work is facilitated by Southern Grampians Glenelg Community Partnership – part of the Barwon South West Public Health Unit

Action 1: Community Engagement Capacity Building



This action was identified in response to the factors in the map that linked to ensuring diversity in participation and leadership in our community as well as ensuring that broader engagement and deliberate reflective listening was incorporated into community engagement. It was noted that increasing better practice in community engagement would ensure that we are in touch with lived experience and local knowledge which would increase cultural knowledge across the community. Western District Health Service will lead implementation of a capacity building program early 2024.

Action 2: Community Connectors Network



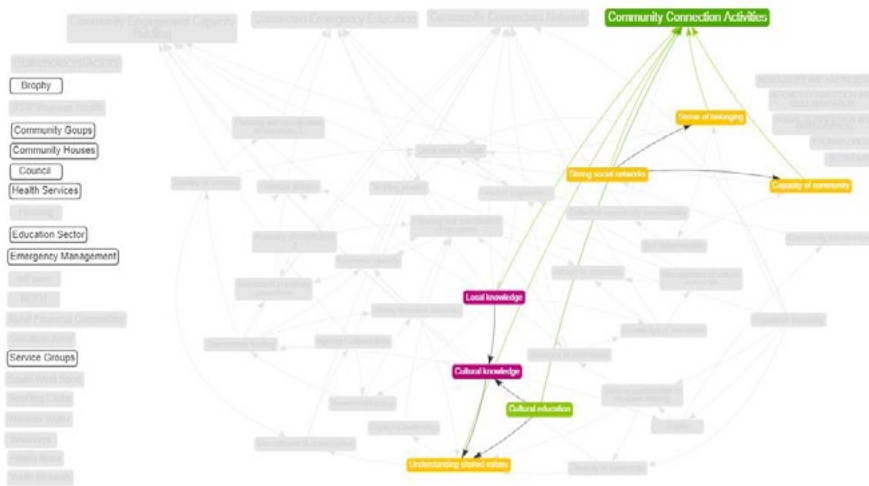
This action was identified noting a gap in the opportunity for cross sector community connectors to network and share learning, opportunities and ideas. A reflection on a former network facilitated by SGGPCP (RASnet) was suggested as a model whereby community connectors could meet 3 – 4 times per year. The identified links are highlighted in this map noting the focus on agency collaboration and increase in local knowledge and capacity. The BSW PHU will facilitate this network.



Appendix 5. (continued)

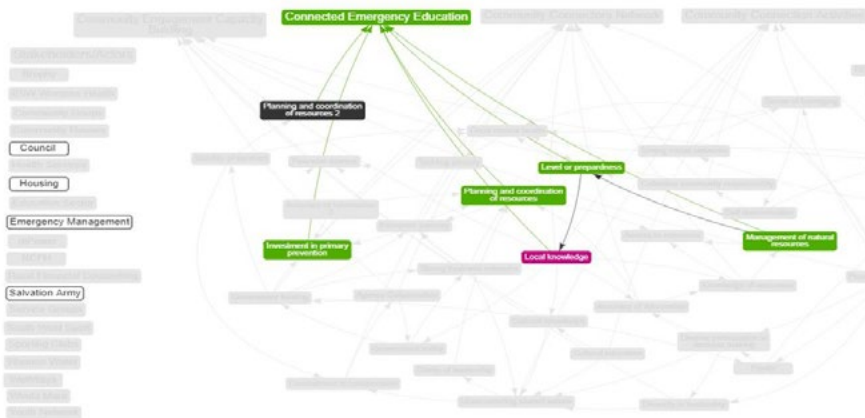
This work is facilitated by Southern Grampians Glenelg Community Partnership – part of the Barwon South West Public Health Unit

Action 3: Community Connection Activities



Social and community connection was a consistent theme throughout the GMB workshops as well as highlighted in the consultations as being a key driver of community resilience. Whilst many organisations implement action around community connection, the participants agreed the value placed on this work could be improved. In the first instance Casterton Memorial Hospital will work with Hands Up Casterton and the new Youth Space to co-design connection activities with young people and implement locally.

Action 4: Connected Emergency Education



The Emergency Management Sector noted the opportunity to connect more with a specific focus on education locally. Whilst this sector have operational planning meetings and structures in place, there is a gap in building an educators network locally. This action is still in development with local emergency education providers.

Further information
 Ebony.rhook@barwonhealth.org.au
 Rowena.wylie@barwonhealth.org.au

This work is funded by the Victorian Department of Health Mental Health Branch



PROUDLY DESIGNED AND PRINTED IN HAMILTON, VICTORIA BY



ivoryprint.com.au

info@ivoryprint.com.au

 Ivory Print

**BARWON
SOUTH
WEST**
Public Health Unit



**Barwon
Health**